



Carnegie Shul Chatter

December 18, 2019



Light Candles 4:38pm

Shabbat Services 9:20 am

Chanukah 2019

With Chanukah beginning at sundown this coming Sunday evening, I thought that the following article, from thetrugmans.com, gives an excellent explanation of the relevance of Chanukah to our Jewish experience today. This source, which may be unfamiliar to some of us, is a website sharing the teachings of Rabbi Avraham Arie and Rachel Trugman, who have 35 years of experience in the field of Jewish education. A founding family of Israel's Moshav Meor Modiim, the Trubmans are Directors of Ohr Chadash: New Horizons in Jewish Experience, a dynamic program they created that has engaged tens of thousands participants. They have visited over 40 cities world-wide, leading Shabbatons, giving classes, performing music and serving as scholars-in-residence.

An Important Holiday

As a teen, I was often told that Chanukah was a minor holiday, made into a bigger deal than it should be by its proximity to Christmas. I was told that the giving of gifts was made into a big deal so Jewish kids wouldn't be envious of their Gentile neighbors. I was told that it is not a Yom Tov and that it has no Torah significance, as do Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Passover, and Sukkos.

And that may very well have been true.

BUT.

Chanukah is — and should be — a big deal. It is a chance for Jews to celebrate the great victory over the Greeks and the miracle of the oil. And, even more importantly, as the main article here says, “The teachings of Chanukah are as radiant and penetrating as light itself and are certainly not confined to one holiday or custom. The fight for freedom and independence, the protection of our sacred beliefs and its universal message are the teachings the Maccabees have handed us.”

And so let us not minimize this holiday, but let us celebrate and enjoy the eight special nights that we are about to experience.

The Relevance of Chanukah Today

Without a doubt Chanukah is one of the most popular holidays among the Jewish people. Even for those whose level of religious observance is almost nonexistent, Chanukah has become a potent national, cultural, and symbolic holiday. Along with Seder night, Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, lighting Chanukah lights has taken its place as an almost minimal requirement of Jewish identification. There is certainly some truth to the theory that Chanukah has gained such popularity because of its proximity to Christmas and the need to compensate for Christmas shopping and the holiday atmosphere present in most Christian countries where Jews reside. As true as this may be, it does not explain its great importance in Israel today, where competition with Christmas and the commercialism of giving gifts is not present.



When the leaders and Sages of that time experienced the victory over the Greeks, it was crystal clear to them that G-d had intervened to save His Torah and His people from spiritual extinction. They did not have to see “fire coming down from heaven” to know that their victory could only have occurred with G-d’s help. This conviction led to the establishment of a new holiday instituted by the people of Israel. With all the incredible occurrences in Jewish history, only two religious holidays have been added to the calendar – Purim and Chanukah. It is explained that the holiday of Chanukah symbolizes among other things the power of renewal. Being the last of the holidays in chronological order, the lesson is clear: the Torah is not a closed book and the Oral tradition is an ongoing and vibrant enterprise meant to keep Judaism alive and growing.

When looking at the history of the period we see that the Maccabees had to contend as much with the problem of assimilation as they did with the Greeks. The widespread allure of Western culture and its impact on Judaism today corresponds very much to the draw Greek culture had in its day. The more Jews turned away from Judaism to embrace Greek culture, the more pressure the Greeks applied, until they declared all out war on the Torah and those who practiced it.

With all the enemies pitted against us today, we can hardly afford the devastation of our people from within. At its peak, the army of the Maccabees never numbered over 8,000 men, yet their determination and selflessness assured Jewish spiritual survival. The root of the word Chanukah means to dedicate or educate. Today, we need an



army of dedicated Jewish educators who are able to make Jewish history, culture, and religion come alive and be personally relevant and meaningful to each individual Jew, and in fact to the entire world.

This idea leads us directly to the meaning and symbolism of the Chanukah lights. After recapturing Jerusalem, the Maccabees turned their attention to renewing the service in the Holy Temple, which had been desecrated by the Greeks and turned into a Temple of idol worship. As they finished their work they realized that no oil fitting to light the menorah could be found and only after a lengthy search could one cruse of oil, with the seal of the High Priest be located. Miraculously the oil, enough for only one day, burned for eight days until more oil could be prepared for the Temple service. It is this tradition which forms the basis of our custom to light candles during Chanukah and it is through this ritual that we celebrate all the miracles that occurred.

When Matthatias stood up in Modiim and declared: "All who are zealous for God follow me," he symbolically "lit" the first light of Chanukah. If one stands in a pitch black cave and lights even one match he has already dispelled the absolute darkness. This truth is reflected in the fact that Chanukah comes during the time of year when the nights are the longest. It is then that we need the light the most.

No event in the Torah or our Oral tradition can be interpreted one-dimensionally. The miracle of the oil at Chanukah is more than a singular occurrence, but instead a continually reoccurring force in Jewish history. The blessing we say each night as we light the candles: "who made miracles for our fathers in those days in our time means that these miracles are happening or waiting to happen "in our time."

Despite finding the Temple desecrated and vandalized, there still remained one cruse of oil undefiled and pure. This represents the phenomenon that no matter how great the persecution or despair, or how far assimilation spreads in the Jewish people as a whole, or in an individual Jew, still there remains in every Jewish heart one drop of pure, undefiled oil, waiting only to be lit. This reality can explain the truly miraculous survival of the Jews for 4,000 years, despite continuous attempts to snuff out our light. The oil symbolizes renewal, hope, hidden strength and determination and stands ready and waiting to be used when things seem the hardest. The recent phenomenon of mass immigration from Russia in the 1990's, of the Ethiopian community returning to Israel and the general return to religion by many secular Israelis and assimilated



Jews in western countries, are all examples of this hidden light which can never be extinguished.

The war against the Greeks was more than a physical war, but in fact a battle of opposing world views. The Greeks symbolized the glorification of the physical, the worship of logic and science, and above all the descent into hedonism. Not that Greek or today's western civilization is without merit or positive qualities, but as a whole it is very different than the Jewish religious, culture and world outlook.



The lights of Chanukah have come to represent the fight for freedom, but this fight is based on the spiritual light and truth as expressed in our tradition. When compared to the power of nuclear energy – what is a little candle? But we know that it is the eternity of the soul rooted in G-d that is the strength and the secret of Jewish survival, as it says: “the candle of G-d is the soul of man” (Proverbs 20:27).

When adding each night of Chanukah a new candle, till reaching the eighth night, we are confirming our faith in the righteousness of our cause and the hope revealed in the words of our prophets. Isaiah revealed that our mission is to be a “light unto the nations” and prophesied about a world of peace, love and harmony (Isaiah 49:6). This too is the message of Chanukah – to never forget that vision or our responsibility to try in even the smallest of ways to bring light to others and the world. One of the qualities of light is that from one candle a thousand more can be lit, without diminishing the original flame. Each individual is a potential lighthouse in a world of stormy seas.

Israel's strength and purpose is not to be a nation like all other nations. Especially after 2,000 years of exile, we must concentrate on creating a unique society, which though it may borrow, adapt and learn from what the world has to offer, still, the world is looking to us for something different and new. As awesome as the task may be and as incapable as we may feel to fulfill this mission, we must be true to our destiny.

The eight nights of Chanukah represents the victory of the eternal over the temporal, the spiritual over the material. The number eight symbolizes the covenant between G-d and his people, connecting Chanukah to the idea of circumcision and entering the covenant on the eighth day. All together during Chanukah we light thirty-six candles ($1+2+3...+8 = 36$), representing the thirty-six hidden righteous people in every generation, whose deeds uphold the whole world. Each Jew, when activating their own hidden light, has the ability to uphold the world, adding a new spark of hope and clarity in the darkness.

The teachings of Chanukah are as radiant and penetrating as light itself and are certainly not confined to one holiday or custom. The fight for freedom and independence, the protection of our sacred beliefs and its universal message are the teachings the Maccabees have handed us. May we be true to the task entrusted to us.

7TH Annual
**South Hills
Lights**

Community Chanukah Festival

Sunday December 22nd 5:00 PM

Potomac Ave & Belrose Ave
(a block away from Hollywood Theater)

Hot Latkes
& Doughnuts!
Chocolate Gelt
for every child!
Hot Drinks!
Glow-in-the-Dark
Chanukah Swag!



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Free to attend! Open to all!
ONSITE Parking- see website for details

RSVP* Appreciated
www.chabadsh.com/lights
412.344.2424 ~ mussie@chabadsh.com
*all advance RSVP's will be entered into a raffle

SOUTH HILLS

5TH NIGHT Chanukah

CELEBRATION!

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26
5:00-7:00 P.M.

SOUTH HILLS JCC
345 KANE BLVD., 15243



FREE
& open
to the entire
community!

- Menorah Lighting, DJ, & Chanukah Sing-A-Long
- Latkes, Pizza, Salad, & Donuts
- PJ Library Quiet Corner & Chanukah Photo Booth
- Balloon Artist & Airbrush Face Painting
- Gaga Pit, Basketball, & Chanukah Crafts
- Open Swimming (pool is open 'til 9:30 p.m.)

RSVP: southhillsjewishpittsburgh.org/chanukah19

BRING A BOTTLE OF OLIVE OIL (OR ANY OTHER COOKING OIL) FOR OUR FRIENDS AT SOUTH HILLS INTERFAITH MOVEMENT (SHIM).

PRESENTED BY SOUTH HILLS JEWISH PITTSBURGH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

