



The El Paso CHABAD TIMES

Issue 162

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December 2020 | Kislev 5781

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CHANUKAH READ ALONG
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December 10 - 18
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The Rabbi's Message



When vinegar shines brightly

How can we possibly celebrate Chanukah during a pandemic that doesn't allow us to gather with extended family, friends and community?

In Talmudic times there lived a great sage named R' Chanina Ben Dosa. One Shabbat evening he noticed that his daughter was very distraught. She shared with him that she accidentally placed vinegar into the Shabbos lamp she had just lit and there was no time to exchange the vinegar for oil. "My Shabbos candles will burn out so quickly!" she wailed. "Fear not, my daughter," he said. "Just as G-d commanded the oil to serve as fuel for fire, He can command the vinegar in your lamp to serve as fuel as well."

Indeed, those vinegar Shabbos lamps burned for the entire Shabbos.

G-d granted us the joyous festival of Chanukah so that we could increase the light in our world. The Chanukah candles are meant to be lit toward the outside in the evening because they are all about bringing the light of Judaism to the furthest

and darkest recesses of our world.

And yet this year we are limited in our reach and instead of joining with others we need to remain at home. Sure we can connect over Zoom, but it's not the same.

Remember the story of R' Chanina. Although our usual Chanukah experience is like the naturally illuminating "oil" when we can gather with others and celebrate, know that even when life feels as sour and dark as "vinegar" and we are forced to celebrate alone, this itself can be the greatest conduit for blessing.

This year we must focus on our immediate family, spend more time with your spouse, with the children and if you are home alone spend a few extra minutes gazing at the flickering flames and listen intently to the story they tell of courage, faith, sacrifice and miracles.

Seize the opportunity to nurture your inner light, peace and faith and we will come out of this pandemic stronger and better than ever before. As we celebrate the redemption of Chanukah may we merit very soon to experience the ultimate redemption through Moshiach who will usher in an era of world peace and tranquility for all.

Please remember to give Chanukah Gelt (money) to all your children and grandchildren.

Happy Chanukah!

Rabbi Yisrael Greenberg

Mazel Tov

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Proud Grandparents

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A Holiday Message from the Lubavitcher Rebbe



The Rebbe addresses to the participants of a children's Chanukah rally in the main synagogue at Lubavitch World Headquarters.

As has been often said before, all matters of Torah are an inexhaustible source of lessons and inspiration for our daily life, especially when they take the form of practical mitzvos [commandments], since the Torah and mitzvos are infinite, being derived from the Infinite. I mention this here apropos of the mitzva of the Chanuka lights, especially in relation to one particular aspect which, at first, appears quite puzzling.

I am referring to the fact that although Chanuka recalls many

miracles and wonders, the main event for which Chanuka was instituted was the miracle of the cruse of oil, the one and only one that was found in the Beis Hamikdash (the Holy Temple), that was intact and undefiled by the enemy, which was then kindled and which lasted for eight days, until new, pure and holy oil could be prepared.

What is puzzling about it is that the oil was not required for human consumption, nor for the consumption of the Altar, but for fuel in the Menora to be burnt

Light Must Be Pure

in the process of giving light. It would seem, at first glance, of no consequence, insofar as the light is concerned whether or not the oil had been touched and defiled, for, surely, the quality and intensity of the light could hardly be affected by the touch.

Yet, when the Talmud defined the essence of the Chanuka festival, the Sages declared that the crucial aspect was the miracle of the oil. Not that they belittled or ignored the great miracles on the battlefields, when G-d delivered the "mighty" and "many" into the hands of the "weak" and "few," for these miracles are also emphasized in the prayer of "V'al Hanissim" ["and all the miracles"].

Nevertheless, it was the miracle of being able to light the Menora with pure, holy oil, without any touch of uncleanness, which gave rise to the Festival of Lights.

The obvious lesson is that in the realm of the spirit, of Torah and mitzvos, as symbolized by the Chanuka lights, there must be

absolute purity and holiness. It is not for the human mind to reason why, and what difference it makes, etc.

To carry the analogy further, it is the purpose of the central Holy Temple to illuminate and bring holiness and purity into the individual "Holy Temple" - i.e., every Jewish home and every Jewish person, which is also the obligation of every Jew toward his fellow Jew, in accordance with the mitzva of "love your fellow as yourself." But special precautions are necessary that the Holy Temple itself be illuminated with the purest, sanctified oil, so that even the High Priest, if he should happen to be impure, could not enter the Holy Temple, much less kindle the Menora.

May G-d grant you success in the spirit outlined above, truly reflecting the spirit of the Chanuka lights, lighting ever more candles and increasing their glow from day to day.

With blessings.

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From the Rabbis' Blog

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Dedicated by **Northeast Feed**



Rabbi Levi Greenberg

Eight months into COVID madness I hear from so many that they expect only the worst from 2020 after so many disappointments. Aside from the pandemic's devastating impact on public health and our economy, the forced isolation that has brought with it lonely birthdays, Passover, High Holidays and now Thanksgiving is having a demoralizing effect.

Several weeks ago over 5,000 Chabad rabbis faced a similar disappointment as the annual Chabad Lubavitch Convention was staged online instead of in the halls

of Brooklyn for obvious reasons. Sure there would be workshops, presentations and plenty of inspiration, but I and most of my contemporaries expected a damper of a convention since its main appeal would simply not exist on so many levels.

Then something wild happened.

Each year the convention features a Saturday night event called Melave Malka, the traditional meal held at the close of Shabbat. Since the thousands of Chabad rabbis all over the globe would be celebrating the conclusion of Shabbat at vastly different times, the organizers conceived a rolling Melave Malka event which started Saturday night in Australia while New York was still sleeping and as Shabbat concluded in more time zones other rabbis joined the program culminating with Alaska and Hawaii close to 24 hours later.

All went according to plan, until some rabbis in Australia woke up

Sunday morning and, in the spirit of the convention, tuned into the Zoom program that was reaching its final minutes with our Hawaiiin colleagues. The atmosphere was so joyous and compelling, they continued sharing chassidic stories, words of inspiration and camaraderie - which ultimately continued for a total of 138 hours!

The unending flow of Chassidic inspiration was electrifying and guys in multiple time zones were tuning in at all hours of the day and night, to the point that it was officially closed on Thursday evening with over 1,000 participants online. While the event set a record for the world's longest Zoom meeting, more importantly, it transformed an otherwise forced online convention into the most inspirational convention experience we ever had.

Several weeks ago we learned in the Torah how Yitzchak intended to bless his eldest son Eisav but blessed Yaakov instead, thanks to

an elaborate deception arranged by their mother Rivka. The explanation of why this scenario of dishonesty was the right thing to do at the time is beyond the scope of this message, but the fact remains that the tremendous blessings of Jewish destiny came to us in an awkward and uncomfortable fashion. This teaches us that at times the best emerges from what can seem to be the worst.

I and my colleagues experienced it this week and I hope and pray we merit such a transformation on a global level as well. That these terribly dark and frustrating times imminently lead to a brighter future, the era of Moshiach, when the world will be healed of all illness, suffering and jealousy and peace will prevail for all.

Through learning more Torah, doing more Mitzvot, increasing our charitable giving and encouraging everyone to add in goodness and kindness we can make this happen even faster.

17th Annual Raffle

Dear Friend,

Celebrating 34 years of community and friendship, we are filled with a sense of pride and gratitude. Pride in the beautiful community we have become and gratitude to you for partnering with us in this revolutionary endeavor. Your commitment and support is what enables us to reach out to every Jew in the region regardless of social status, background or affiliation.

At Chabad we aim to facilitate the spiritual growth of every Jew. To provide opportunities to discover our glorious heritage, the beauty of Torah and mitzvot, at a comfortable pace and in a non-judgmental environment. During these challenging times we have continued our programming online and in socially distant settings to ensure that every Jew have the opportunity to continue to grow in their Judaism and feel part of the community.

We are hosting our annual fundraising raffle to help support the many ongoing activities. Please participate by purchasing one or more tickets and become a partner in ensuring a vibrant Jewish future in El Paso. The grand prize is two round trip tickets to Israel (\$3,000.00).

One (1) ticket - \$100.00 | Three (3) Tickets - \$250.00
The raffle drawing will be held on January 28, 2021.

Chabad remains dedicated to strengthening Jewish identity, unity and education in El Paso.

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The Festival of Chanukah



Chanukah - the eight-day festival of light that begins on the eve of Kislev 25 - celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, of purity over adulteration, of spirituality over materiality.

More than twenty-one centuries ago, the Holy Land was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks), who sought to forcefully Hellenize the people of Israel.

The cruel King Antiochus forced the Greek pantheon of idol worship on Israel in 164 B.C.E. He appointed apostates who adopted Greek names, dress and thought to reduce the holy Torah to mere literature, rather than Divine truth.

But many Jews remained loyal to the Torah, so the angry Antiochus sent soldiers to attack them and to enforce his rules. The Greeks forbade Jewish practice, but the faithful Jews defied their ban on Torah study, circumcision and Shabbat.

Heroic Jews like Chana and her seven sons refused to bow to a Greek idol, and the elderly Matisyahu from Modin and his five sons the 'Maccabees' revolted against the oppression and prevailed over the mighty Greeks.

Against all odds, a small band of faithful Jews defeated one of the mightiest armies on earth, drove the Greeks from the land, reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and rededicated it to the service of G-d.

When they sought to light the Temple's menorah they found only a single cruse of olive oil that had escaped contamination by the

Greeks. Miraculously, the one-day supply burned for eight days until new oil could be prepared under conditions of ritual purity.

To commemorate and publicize these miracles, the sages instituted the festival of Chanukah. At the heart of the festival is the nightly Menorah lighting: a single flame on the first night, two on the second evening, and so on till the eighth night of Chanukah, when all eight lights are kindled.

This year, we usher in Chanukah by lighting the first candle on Thursday, December 10th after 5:03 pm.

The Menorah's 8 lights must be of equal height, all in a row. To differentiate it from the other Chanukah candles, the Shamash 'servant' candle is placed a little higher or lower.

Most Menorahs use candles, while some prefer olive oil with wicks that can be purchased or homemade by twisting a puff of absorbent cotton into a 2-3 inch string.

An electric menorah does not fulfill the Mitzvah obligation, but may be placed in addition to a candle or oil menorah to promote Chanukah awareness.

A holiday of renewal and rededication, Chanukah promotes Jewish heritage. Children should light their own Menorahs.

In the absence of a designed Menorah, any metal containers may be used, making sure there is no fire hazard. During the Holocaust and Communist oppression, Jews improvised Menorahs from hollowed potatoes filled with margarine or fat. Israeli soldiers have used spent ammunition canisters lined in a row as their Menorah.

On the first night, the flame on the Menorah's extreme right is lit. Another flame is added to the left of the previous flame each succeeding night. The new flame is lit first, followed by the flame to its right, and so on, until all eight flames are kindled.

The Menorahs are placed at the doorpost across the mezuzah and

some place it at the window facing the street. Kindled at sunset or nightfall, the candles should burn at least half an hour after dark.

On Friday, December 11th, the Chanukah lights are kindled before the Shabbat candle lighting time 4:45 pm. (Shabbat begins once the Shabbat candles are lit, so it is forbidden to light the Menorah later.) Saturday night December 12th, the Chanukah candles are lit after the "Havdalah" ceremony bids farewell to Shabbat. Shabbat ends at 5:43 pm.

It is customary to sit by the Menorah, tell stories and sing songs. We do not benefit directly from the light of the candles, only from the shamash or regular lights in the room.

Women refrain from household chores during the half-hour that the lights burn, honoring the brave Jewish heroines who played crucial roles in the Chanukah story.

PRAYERS

"Hallel" is recited in the morning prayers. We add "Al Hanisim" in the Amida and during the Grace after meals.

We give Chanukah "Gelt" to children, encouraging them to donate some to charity. Gifts of books, games or toys are also given in addition to the 'Gelt' coins tradition.

The Draydel spinner with Hebrew letters on its four sides is available in metal, plastic or wood in various colors and sizes. The Syrian Greeks forbade Torah study, but the Jews defied the ban and learned in hiding. If Greek soldiers discovered a Torah class, the children would disguise their studies by pretending they were just playing a Draydel game.

HOLIDAY FOODS

Recalling the Chanukah Oil Miracle, it is customary to eat fried foods: potato Latke pancakes and Sufganiot doughnuts.

Dairy specialties recall the heroine Judith who charmed her way into the enemy camp, and gained

the confidence of Helifornos, a vicious Greek general. She served him salty cheese followed by wine to quench his thirst. As he slept, Judith seized his sword and slew him. Realizing that their head had fallen his soldiers ran off in confusion and the Jews were saved.

Before lighting the Menorah the first night, first kindle the Shamash 'servant' candle, and recite the following three blessings. Each additional night recite the first two blessings only.

BLESSINGS

1) Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech

Ha-olom A-sheh Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-sav Ve-tzi-va-nu Le-had-lik Ner Cha-nu-kah.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us by His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the light of Chanukah.

2) Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech

Ha-olom She-o-so Ni-sim La-avo-sei-nu

Ba-yom-mim Ha-heim Biz-man Ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who made miracles for our ancestors in those days, at this time.

(The following blessing is recited the first time you kindle the Menorah.)

3) Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu me-lech

Ha-olom She-heh-che-yoh-nu Ve-ki-yi-mo-nu Ve-he-ge-o-nu Liz-man Ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who kept us alive and preserved us, and enabled us to reach this time.

We light an additional candle each night of Chanukah, leading up to the lighting of all eight candles on Thursday night, December 17th.

Earliest Time for Chanukah Candlelighting (except Friday & Saturday) is after sunset - 5:05pm

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