



שבת חנוכה

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Eternal Lamp

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Part I. Reclaiming Yerushalayim

Proclaim Your Love

We're celebrating Chanukah already and that means it's almost three months since we were standing on our feet in *shul* all day begging Hakodosh Boruch Hu for another year of life, another year of health. And if we're still here, all of us sitting here tonight, it means that we've made it; Hashem has gifted us already with three months of life! And therefore we shouldn't miss the opportunity to say thank you to Hakodosh Boruch Hu: *we love you Hashem for giving us three months of life!*

Right now, everyone should say it out loud. If you wait till you get home, it won't happen. "*Ich hub dir lib, Ribono Shel Olam!*" Don't be embarrassed; everyone, let's say it together: "I love You Hashem." And it's not enough - you should practice it at home too.

Now, above and beyond the joy, the gratitude, the *ahavas Hashem*, that a person must feel just because he is alive - you could be an Eskimo in Alaska, a Hottentot in Africa, it doesn't matter - being alive for another day is fun! It's good times! But more than that, for us sitting here, for the Am Yisroel, there's even more joy than that. Because in addition to life itself, more than that is the joy of knowing that *הַשְּׂכִינָה שׁוֹרָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל* - the *Shechinah* is by us. And that's something we have to keep in mind always, that great truth should be on our mind always, but especially on Chanukah. I'll explain that soon but first a little background.

Antagonistic Antiochus

I'm not going to tell you now the whole story, how it began - it requires a lecture in itself. In the days of the second Beis Hamikdash the Syrian Greeks were in charge of Eretz Yisroel and things became difficult for the Jewish people. In short, when the King of Syria, Seleuces, passed away, his brother, Antiochus, became king and as soon as he took the throne, immediately the Jews knew that

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trouble was waiting for them. He was known to be a wicked man who was out for money. He had no principles but money. The earlier kings also wanted money, but Antiochus wanted nothing but money.

I'm telescoping this but now began the famous period called the generation of *shmad*. *Shmad* means "a destruction because of the faith." It was a fearsome experience. Antiochus issued a decree that nobody could keep anything of the Torah and that all the Jews must worship the Greek god. And anyone who refused would suffer the penalty of death plus torture. Anybody who had a *sefer Torah* in his house, anyone who kept Shabbos, anyone that went to the *mikveh*; any of the practices of Judaism would cause that person to be tortured to death. If a woman circumcised her child, they killed the baby and hung him around her neck with a rope. It was a fearsome experience.

Of course, there were some who yielded – there are always some weaklings, low characters who attempt to emulate the powerful and the vogue. But a great many men and women now began to give away their lives for Hashem. All over the land of Yehudah were enacted scenes of the noblest heroism. This was a time when our nation demonstrated *mesiras nefesh* in loyalty to Hashem.

National Heroism

When Jews were being led forth for execution, so a Jew was being led forth by one party here, another Jew was being led forth by another party; so this Jew said to this one "Why are you being led to death?"

"Because I circumcised my son. And why are you being led to death?"

"Because I kept the Shabbos."

And this was all over the country.

Now we don't know the names of the men, women and children who were tortured to death for the *emunah* because first of all, there were too many to write about. Secondly, in those days Jews didn't write any books. It was a principle not to

write anything except the scriptures, the *Torah Nevi'im uKesuvim*. Besides that nothing was written. Not even a *siddur* was written. You had to learn by memory how to pray. They didn't write anything. It was a principle. No books among Jews except one. There's a reason for that. Among the Greeks there were many books; anyone who wanted could write a book. And these books corrupted the people. This, Plato himself admits. He says that the writers are corrupting the people.

You have to know that unless you're a very worthy person, if you issue a book you're most probably corrupting the people. And the Jews didn't trust *anybody* – nobody was worthy enough. The soul of the Jewish nation was too precious to entrust to an individual. They entrusted it only to the hands of the prophets, and therefore there's only one book, the Tanach.

Havoc by Hellenists

And so, because no official historical records were kept of the *dor hashmad* therefore we don't know the names of all the heroes. We know that many tried to hide in caves where they could keep the Torah, but the enemies came and made fires at the entrance of the caves to suffocate them – but their names we don't know. Even when we're told of the story of Chana and her seven sons, how one son after the other was tortured to death because he refused to bow down to the idols of the Greeks, we have to realize that this is just one out of very many. It's not a story for itself. It's a model of what the Jewish people were doing in those days.

And there was no hope; the Jews didn't see any hope of overcoming the trained armies of the king of Syria. Because in addition to the big armies of the Syrian-Greeks, the Jews were suffering from their own betrayers. They were in the hands of wicked Jews, Hellenized Jews, who ruled the country. And you couldn't make a move without being betrayed by these Jews because they were stationed everywhere. They were tax gatherers,

and they had employees and employees beneath them – a whole hierarchy of tax collectors. And they had spies. You couldn't make a move. If you did, you were finished.

Anger At The Altar

Now everybody knows the rest story but I must retell it. The Greek officials paid a visit to the little town of Modi'in and they set up an altar in the public street. They summoned all the Jews to come and read to them the order of Antiochus that they must worship at this altar to the Greek gods. And in order to make it even more burdensome to the Jews, they brought a swine to be slaughtered on the altar.

Now naturally who were those who were the godfathers of this *mizbeach*? The Jewish renegades. They were standing there to urge on the Jews. But nobody volunteered to come forth; the people were standing sullenly, frightened, but they wouldn't comply. So finally one of these Jewish-Greek renegades, one of these tax gatherers stepped forward and he volunteered to do the good deed of slaughtering the swine on the altar.

Now among the Jews standing there, witnessing this disgusting act, was a certain Mattisyohu. Mattisyohu was an elderly man by this time, an elderly respected man, and he knew that something had to be done. Jews weren't warlike in those days but Mattisyohu had understood beforehand that he must be prepared for the worst, and so he had come with a sword under his cloak. And when he saw that this renegade stepped forward to the altar – I'm going to tell you what's written in the Book of Chashmonaim; although it's not a book written by Torah people but for some of the events it's reliable. It states there that an anger was kindled in him, an anger for Hashem. Mattisyohu was boiling with righteous indignation and he ran forward and he pierced this Greek Jew with his sword; he took his sword and stuck it into the heart of this renegade. And in order to finish the job properly he immediately turned and he slew the Greek official as well.

War Breaks Out

Now that meant revolt. If you slay a Jew, even a renegade Jew, that doesn't necessarily mean revolt. But if you slew the representative of the king it meant that you had raised the banner of revolt and now you couldn't back out.

The people were thunderstruck! They were frozen in place and Mattisyohu turned to them. "Brothers," he said, "there's no use standing around. You'll all be wiped out anyhow. The only thing you can do is come with me. Let's flee into the wilderness and we'll hide in the thickets and the caves. There's no other way out."

"But what's going to happen to our houses?"

"Forget about that," Mattisyahu told them. "It's finished. There's no choice – if you remain here you'll be destroyed down to the last man." And so they fled with him.

Now, when Mattisyohu raised a banner of revolt for the honor of the Torah it encouraged others and that's what they began to do all over Judea now. It was an inspiration for others. And now, a bitter war, a desperate war, commenced. People couldn't live in their homes anymore. They lived in the wilderness. You had to eat in the wilderness. You had to raise children in the wilderness. It was almost impossible to live. They were hiding in caves like wild animals. And don't think they were let alone. The renegades constantly egged on the Greeks to send parties, expeditions to the wilderness to search them out in the caves and destroy them there.

Achieving Independence

But these Jews fought back. They *davened* and fasted and went into battle. They were battling on empty stomachs. They were *tzaddikim*, people of authentic Jewish spirit, and Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave His little army one victory after another. It's a long story but after years of battle, the enemy finally withdrew. Hakodosh Boruch Hu made certain things happen behind the scenes. There was dissension among the kings of Syria themselves.

Some upstarts laid claim to the throne and therefore there was a quarrel between them and it became easier for the Bnei Yisroel to gain their independence. And finally they reentered Yerushalayim.

It was years after Mattisyohu had begun to revolt, and Yerushalayim was desolate. Many Jews had lost their lives and only the renegades had remained in the city and Jewish practice had been decimated; even the Beis Hamikdash had been unused.

And so they came in and they began to rehabilitate the Beis Hamikdash. They cleansed it and purified it. But so much was destroyed and they didn't have the ability to rebuild all the things at once. Even the *menorah* they didn't have anymore; it was gone – the golden *menorah* was gone. So they made a *menorah* out of metal pipes and put in oil. It wasn't like the glory of ancient days – not even as glorious as the early days of the Bayis Sheini – but it was something. The loyal people had won miraculous battles and returned to the holy city of Yerushalayim. The battle was won – the victory was ours.

Part II. Reclaiming the Shechinah

A Queer Question

Now, if you look in the Book of Chashmonaim, you'll find recorded there many more details about the battles and the victories. You'll read there about warrior elephants and Greek soldiers armed with fearsome spears. You'll read about Jewish rebels fighting guerilla warfare, coming out of the caves for quick nighttime attacks, and then escaping back into the mountains. It's a very interesting story.

But you have to know that this book wasn't written by *talmidei chachomim*. It was written by Tzedukim, Sadducees, enemies of the Sages, and therefore it doesn't tell us the whole story. In many

cases the stories are reliable, but if you want to know the story of the Jewish people, what Chanukah really means, there's only one place you'll find it and that's in the Talmud.

So let's hear what the Gemara says. In Mesichta Shabbos (21b) the Gemara asks, מאי חנכה – What's Chanukah? And Rashi explains, על איזה נס קבעוה – for which miracle did they establish the yontif?

Glorious Victories

Now to us it seems to be a simple answer because we know the story; there were tremendous and unexpected victories! And we spend a good amount of time in the *davening* talking about it. רבים ביד מעטים! The miracle of a multitude falling into the hands of the few! After all, the Greeks had a big and strong army and the Jews didn't have any army at all. Absolutely it was a big miracle. It was רבים ביד מעטים וגבורים ביד חלשים, *the strong into the hands of the weak and the many into the hands of the few*.

Not only that but it was רשעים ביד צדיקים. Not only that the *reshaim* were defeated, but the added happiness that they were defeated by *tzaddikim*. That's why we go out of our way to say that the “wicked fell into the hands of *the righteous* and the brazen one fell into the hands of *those who study Your Torah*.”

A tremendous *kiddush Hashem*! Look, when a *rasha* is walking in the street and he falls down dead, so we say “Boruch Hashem.” We say, “Boruch Hashem, *kein yirbu!*” But suppose a *rasha* would start up with a *tzaddik*; he starts up with a *chassidische* boy, a skinny little *chassidische* boy. And this little boy takes his little fist and he gives the *rasha* a hit, and the *rasha* falls down dead. That's a *kiddush Hashem*, no question about it! The wicked one was felled by the righteous one! That itself is a special *simcha*! Because it's a great happiness to see the righteous win out in this world.

And so we know what the *neis* is about; we think we know the answer to “What is Chanukah all about?” We repeat it again and again every day

– three times a day for eight days – רַבְּתָאֵת רִיבָם דְּנִתָּ – אֶת רִיבָם נִקְמַתְ אֶת נִקְמַתָּם Hashem gave us miraculous victories against our enemies!

The Real Reason

But along comes the Gemara and it tells us that this isn't it, that Chanukah wasn't made because of the wars. It wasn't made because they reconquered Yerushalayim now and they were once more able to keep the Torah. They had at least for the time being driven away their enemy and overcome the traitors. No, that wouldn't answer the question, "What's Chanukah about?"

So what was it? For what miracle was Chanukah made? And so the Gemara tells us that well-known story about how when they came into the Beis Hamikdash they couldn't find any oil that was pure. Until they found one cruse that had been hidden away and had been sealed with the seal of the *kohanim* so they knew it hadn't been touched.

But it was only enough for one day of fuel. It would only last one day and they wouldn't have new oil prepared for another week or so. But something happened, a miracle happened, and this oil that was sufficient for only one day, it burned for eight days. A one-day supply of oil should burn for eight days?! It can't be. Maybe an extra few hours it could be; it depends on the temperature and other factors. But eight days?! A miracle! And it was because of this, the Gemara says, that they established Chanukah; *that's* why the next year they began this practice of Chanukah. Forget about the military victories – it was the *neis shemen*, the oil that lasted eight days instead of one, that's the heart and soul of the *yontif* of Chanukah.

Celebrate In Style

Now, it doesn't mean that we actually forget about the *milchamah*; it doesn't mean that we're not also celebrating our victories on the battlefield. Because once we're celebrating we like to celebrate in style – we won't overlook any kindness from Hashem. The many fell into the hands of the few! A

miracle! The strong fell into the hands of the weak! Another miracle! The *reshaim* fell into the hands of the *tzaddikim*! Ahh, a pleasure to see! It was a lot of fun when a handful of men under Yehuda HaMaccabi rushed forward with swords and hacked down an army that was far more superior to them, and they left a field that was full of dead bodies. It was a big *simcha* and therefore we don't neglect that. We speak about it in *Al Hanissim*; we thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu for that as well.

But because we want to be sure to emphasize the real *neis*, the core of the *neis* Chanukah which was nothing but the oil that lasted for eight days, so we don't mix the *neis* of the oil into *Al Hanissim*. We only hint at it: וְהִדְלִיקוּ נְרוֹת בְּחִצְרוֹת קִשְׁיָד – *They kindled neiros too*. But we don't want to speak about it at length in *al hanissim* because then it would lose its character as being most important. We defeated the enemy and we also had a miracle of the *menorah*?! No, no. That would be belittling the *neis* of the oil.

And therefore the real celebration of the *neis* of the Chanukah is played out by itself in our homes. Every night it's a ceremony that stands out on its own and nothing but the oil is commemorated at that ceremony. In *shemonah esrei* we can afford to mention the other things too, but the lighting of the candles that's the *ikar* and we don't want to mix the battles with that, because then you'd be making a mistake about what Chanukah is really about. Because when we analyze what our Sages are telling us, it's that the whole celebration of Chanukah is intrinsically not connected with anything else except the story of the lights of Chanukah.

The Joy Of His Presence

Now the question is: what is so important about the *neis* of the oil? It's a *neis*, no question about it – it's wonderful, to see such a thing, how Hashem will manipulate nature on our behalf – but why is that the heart and soul of the *yontif*? We didn't even need it. So we wouldn't light; it's an *oiness*, it's something beyond our control. So we'd

wait a few more days for new oil to be produced. Big deal. What's so important about the miracle of lights?

And so we must understand that this miracle was coming to emphasize a very important principle in Jewish history, the principle that *הַשְּׁכִינָה שׁוֹרָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל*, the Presence of Hashem rests among the Am Yisroel – Hashem lives among us. That's what Chanukah is about because *that's* what the nation was looking for. Only *that* would be something to rejoice over.

Now there's no question that when the Jewish people were defeating their enemies that they rejoiced that they could return to Yerushalayim, to the Mikdash, and restore the *avodas Beis Hamikdash* and the practices of their nation, the practice of the Torah. But there was still a great despair. And that was, what about the Shechinah? Are we going to merit again that the Shechinah should be by us?

Only With You

And so when Mattisyohu and the Am Yisroel raised the banner of revolt, it wasn't a political revolt, "independence". Oh no, it was much more than that. They wanted to bring back the Jewish nation to what it had been. That was the dearest wish of our nation – in all the generations the Jew wanted to have close to him the Presence of the Shechinah. Otherwise what use is it?

Don't you remember when Hakodosh Boruch Hu said to Moshe after the making of the *eigel hazahav*? He said: "I'm not going with you anymore. I'm going to send a messenger, a *malach*, in front of you and he'll lead you to the land; he'll conquer your enemies for you and you'll have all good things." So what did Moshe Rabeinu say? He said, "If You're not going, then let us stay right here. We don't want to move out of the desert. Just to conquer our enemies and to give us a land flowing with milk and honey is not our hearts' desire. If Your Shechinah, the Presence of Hashem, is not manifested that it goes with us then *אַל תַּעֲלֵנוּ מִזֶּה*, don't take us out of here (Shemos 33:15).

Your hear such a thing? Even if we'll come into Eretz Yisroel and have everything we've been looking forward to, if it won't be together with the Shechinah, we don't want it. Because they would have been missing something that was the essence of Judaism, that the Shechinah is *shoreh b'Yisroel*, the Shechinah dwells among us.

A Lifeless State

And so even when they finally returned to Yerushalayim, it was still a question. Just to conquer our enemies and win victories? Hashem, we want to be restored to Your favor! What's it all worth if we haven't been restored to the favor of Hashem. What's it all worth without the Presence of Hashem. A State? A Jewish State? Independence? It's worthless without the Shechinah. It's a shell, a lifeless body.

It's like somebody who saw a friend of his *chalilah* fall into the sea and finally after some time they fished him out. They recovered the body. Now the body is lying on the beach. Did you ever see a body recovered from the water? I once saw it. They recovered a body not long after he was drowned. He's lying on the beach. Very good! We have the body back! But the question is, is there any life left? That's the question. I remember they were working on him, searching for some life. Just to recover the body, that's nothing. Is there still a spark of life?

And so when they returned to Yerushalayim, very good. Let's say they had recovered their independence. It wasn't complete independence, but now they were back in Yerushalayim and they had regained the Beis Hamikdash and they were doing the service. They were even lighting the *menorah*. The body they had recovered. But the old spirit of Hashem that once inhabited that place, did we lose that? That's what they were in despair about. Did the sins of the wicked extinguish it entirely and now never again would it be recovered until Moshiach came?

They weren't accustomed to being a nation that walked in darkness and that lived merely with an abstraction. The people were in a depression. They felt that they were walking in darkness, and they yearned for some sign that Hakodosh Boruch Hu was with them. And so when they went through the procedures of the *avodas Beis Hamikdash* it was with joy but there was sadness too; even despair, desperate for some sign of His Presence.

Hatzaddik was a *kohen gadol* in the early days of the Bayis Sheini and when he passed away this miracle stopped; it stopped because of circumstances. We won't talk about that now, but there were circumstances that justified it stopping. The people were now sinking down into a different level of spiritual existence and they didn't deserve to see that open sign anymore.

Exciting News!

Part III. Reclaiming Chanuka

A Miraculous Testimony

Now when they lit the *menorah* – they did it as one of the many things, one of the many duties in the Beis Hamikdash that they had to do – so in the morning the *kohanim* came in to begin the morning *avodah*, they noticed something strange. The *menorah* was still burning! Still burning? That doesn't make sense. Immediately they rushed out and they announced that something had happened. "The lights haven't gone out!" And all the *kohanim* came in to see what was doing; it was something marvelous in their eyes.

Everyone understood the significance of that miracle. Everyone knew the tradition from the days when our nation in the Wilderness first began to light the *menorah* in the Mishkan. The Gemara (Shabbos 22b) says that a miracle took place every night in the Mishkan. The *ner maaravi*, the western lamp on the *menorah* didn't go out with the other lights in the morning. Even though the same amount of oil was put into each lamp, this one light remained burning. A miracle every morning.

And the Gemara (*ibid.*) says that the purpose was *עדות היא לְבֵאֵי עוֹלָם שֶׁהַשְּׂכִינָה שׁוֹרָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל* – *It's a special miracle for the purpose of letting us know that the Shechinah rests with us.* That miraculous light was an indication, a sign, that He's with us.

But that miracle had already stopped years before, after the days of Shimon Hatzaddik. Shimon

And now we are dealing with a period that wasn't long after Shimon Hatzaddik and suddenly that sign is showing itself again. And it's even greater. It's not one lamp that's not extinguishing; it's all of them! It appears to be something different, something greater. Hashem is showing us something!

The news spread among the people, and everybody was talking about it. Whoever could, tried to see it with their own eyes – they were watching, "What's going to happen?" And they saw that these little lights were still flickering. People stood there, watching over them all day and into the night. The people didn't sleep.

And the next morning the announcement went forth, "They're still burning!" And excitement began mounting; *bechol tefutzos Yisroel* the news began to spread. It was such an astonishing miracle that the entire nation was inflamed by excitement. It wasn't a secret; people were there. There were thousands who came in to view the rebuilding of the destroyed Beis Hamikdash and every day they watched that flame continue and they hovered between hope and despair; it will go out soon: no, it didn't go out – the flame did not go out!

And every day the excitement became greater and greater, and finally when the new oil was finally expressed and it was prepared and they rushed it to the Beis Hamikdash, they still found at the end of eight days that the lamp was still burning and the nation went wild with joy.

A Fire of Exhilaration

Now, to the people there it meant something very special. It was more than a miracle. *Eidus*, it's a testimony, that Hashem is resting His Presence by us. That fire was to them a symbol of Hashem. Hashem is here! Hashem on the *menorah*! A little bit of oil, it's burning more than it's supposed to burn, that's Hashem's Fire there. And they were so happy! "Hashem is here among us. Up till now He was hiding; He was among us but He was hiding. And now we see He is here. He's showing us something!"

The excitement became so great, it was like a conflagration of joy. A big fire of exhilaration enveloped the whole Beis Yisroel. It's impossible to describe the tremendous enthusiasm and happiness that engulfed our nation when they heard that that fire had burned for eight days. All over Eretz Yisroel and in the *tefutzos*, the Jews in Syria, the Jews in Bavel, wherever Jews lived, the news was being sent to them by courier. They were hastening to all the four corners of the earth wherever Jews dwelled to let them know the news. And the Jewish nation was intoxicated. They were dancing in the streets. They kissed each other. "Moshe! You heard?! The Shechinah is with us! Yosef! You heard how Hashem showed us?!"

And it was a *yontif*. Ahh! Life is wonderful now! Victories are important but now we feel that the Shechinah has evinced its favor once more. The Shechinah had returned to Yisroel. And that's "*Mai Chanukah*". That's what Chanukah is all about, that the Shechinah is with us.

The Fake Chanukah

Now, I understand that this ideal of what Chanukah really is has been ignored and forgotten by very many of us — even among the *frummeh*. The others I'm not even talking about because if you're from the camp that's going to make a big fuss about gifts and wrapping, then there's nobody to talk to — you're very far away from the *Mai Chanukah* of our Sages. You might as well sing

carols and put up a Chanukah tree, because that's what it really is.

How did Chanukah go lost? It's because we are accustomed to seeing history through the eyes of the wrong people; the history that we read is usually written by atheists, and therefore it's a materialistic history. And so Chanukah became a materialistic holiday. The truth is that today Chanukah is celebrated by the very renegades who back then were on the wrong side of Jewish history. We have to know that if Mattisyohu lived in Eretz Yisroel today, he would be waging war against the leaders of the State of Israel with the same vehemence that he fought against Antiochus and the Hellenizers.

It's a pity that it's an upside down world. You pass by today a Reform temple and you see a *menorah* outside and you get the idea that Chanukah is also a Reform temple business, *chas v'shalom*. You see a *menorah* in the State of Israel, on the stamps, in the Knesses. They consider themselves the Maccabees; they 'celebrate' Chanukah too.

Of course, we know it's nothing, that it's empty, but there's no question that it seeps in. It's a pity that so many ideals that we attach to Chanukah today have in a large part seeped in from the outside; the weak minded people are beguiled by superficial ideas and they miss out on the real lesson of Chanukah, the authentic *Mai Chanuka*, the Awareness that Hashem is with us.

Awareness of Greatness

And you shouldn't disdain that Awareness! It's only because we're accustomed to living with materialistic thoughts and ideals so it sounds unimportant to us. But our Sages understood that this was everything. Battles and victories, very good. But is the Shechinah by us? That's what matters most! It's not *one* of the things that Chanuka teaches — it's *the* thing! *Mai Chanukah*? Chanukah means we have to be aware of the

greatness of the Am Yisroel, that the Shechinah rests over them!

The awareness, the feeling and knowledge, that the Shechinah rests on us – and only us – is the source of all happiness. Everything else, good and not so good, is overshadowed by that fact. You're with the Am Yisroel, the nation that Hashem loves, the people upon whom He rests His Presence? Then all is good! If you're aware of that then all is wonderful! Life is good!

And because it's so important, that's why even though there was no longer any *nevuah* in Yisroel in the second Beis Hamikdash and even though we stopped having open *nissim* like in the days of old, but all of a sudden in the time of Chanukah, Hakodosh Boruch Hu pulled back the curtain and He said, "Don't despair. I'm still here with you." That's what the *neis shemen* told them, "I'm with you now and I'll be with you forever."

Ecstasy in Emunah

That's why they went *meshugah* with happiness. And that's why they established a *yontif*. To remind us! So that we shouldn't forget it! That's what the Gemara is trying to tell us; that miracle of the *menorah* is teaching this Torah principle that whether you see it or not, the שְׂכִינָה שׁוֹרָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, the Shechinah dwells among us forever.

And so when Chanukah comes we have to try to recapture a little bit of that ecstasy that our forefathers experienced. Chanukah means, "Don't despair! Hashem is here!" Because even today, even though we don't see any open miracles today, you should know that the Shechinah is among the *frum* Jews. There's the Shechinah in Brooklyn, in Flatbush and Borough Park and in Williamsburg; wherever there are *frum* Jews, Crown Heights, Lakewood, in Eretz Yisroel, wherever there are Jews that observe Hashem's Torah, the Shechinah is there. And it's not merely a *moshol*, a form of speech or poetry. There is a holiness of Hashem's Presence that's invisible but is more real than we are real.

You can't see it? So Chanukah comes to strengthen the *emunah*. Chanukah means that we have *emunah sheleimah* that Hakodosh Boruch Hu will be forever with us and never forsake us. That's the great benefit that we gain from the story of Chanukah, the strengthening of our Awareness that the Shechinah is among us.

Ecstasy on Chanukah

But it won't come by itself. If you don't put some effort into it so Chanukah comes and goes and it's a wasted opportunity. You have to think about that, that the Shechinah rests upon our people, that the Shechinah is with us here right now. We are expected to spend part of our lives in realizing this tremendous truth, that the Shechinah is *shoreh b'Yisroel*. It's a matter of *emunah*! It won't come by itself.

Of course, to a certain extent it does – merely by joining the Am Yisroel and lighting the candles, some of it seeps in by means of osmosis. But it's not enough. We have to spend time on it, trying to convince ourselves more and more that the Shechinah is right here, among us right here, right now. The Shechinah rests over us! *Baruch Hashem* that He came to us!

That's the way to celebrate Chanukah. That's what you're happy about, that's what you're singing about. That's why we sing, because we'll be here forever and He'll be here with us forever. That's why they were filled with happiness on that first Chanukah; they were singing in joy. And that's why we're still singing today.

Ecstasy Forever

It's two thousand years since the first Chanukah and we're still singing. Still singing?! You know, if you buy a singing machine for a child, the first week it works. Maybe it works for two weeks. If it works for five years it's a pretty good machine. After five years if a music box keeps on working, if it will keep on working for fifty years, it's not a child's toy – it's a masterpiece. And if it will sing for two thousand years – it can't be; it's a miracle.

The Jewish nation never stopped singing. We're still singing on Chanukah, *Al Hanissim*, *MaozTzur Yeshuasi*, whatever we sing. You know why we're still singing? Because when we saw that the *menorah* wasn't going out we got a shock that set us off. We have no idea how wild with happiness we were. We're still singing it because we went wild then. That's the happiness of this time of the year. Not only that we're still around, but we're still around with the Shechinah.

And Chanukah has to reinforce us. When Chanukah passes through, we should be left over with some residue, some benefit, some result from Chanukah. **הִזְקֵנוּ וְאִמְצָנוּ** - *we shall become stronger and more convinced* that the Shechinah is right here. Not only in the ancient days it rested in the Yisroel, but the Shechinah is with us for ever and ever. That should be the first lesson and most important lesson of Chanukah, that the light will never go out.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos Chanukah

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Yearning For Shechinah

According to our Sages, the revealed Presence of the Shechinah is all we're celebrating on Chanukah. We rejoice in the fact that Hashem has Chosen us and Desires to be among us forever. This Chanukah I will *bli neder* take a minute every night to gaze into the lights and reflect on how lucky I am to be a part of Hashem's Chosen Nation and I will pray for the return of the Shechinah to Zion where we may once again serve Him as in ancient times and days of yore.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

148 - Chanukah I | 896 - The Eternal Lamp (Chanukah 16)
E-231 - And Put Our Lot With Them

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What is a practical lesson that we could take out of Chanukah?



I'll tell you one important lesson. We say to Hashem about our forefathers who fought the *Yevanim*: **דנת את ריבם** - "You, Hashem, judged their quarrels; You fought their fight." Now, there's a question here. Because it wasn't *their* quarrel. It wasn't the quarrel of the Am Yisroel. It was *Your* quarrel, Hashem. Because, after all, the Greeks weren't interested in killing Jews. They wanted the Jews to stop keeping the Torah, that's all. If the Am Yisroel would be willing to behave like the Greeks, they wouldn't bother them. So why was the Am Yisroel fighting? They weren't fighting for their safety; they were fighting for Hashem's Word. It was for *kevod shomayim*, for the honor of Hashem, that they fought. So it wasn't **רבת את ריבם**. It was **רבת את ריבך** - Hashem, You fought Your own fight! You fought Your quarrel!

But no, we don't say that. We say **רבת את ריבם** - You, Hashem, fought *their* fight! Because our forefathers had fulfilled what we say **עשה רצונו כרצונך** - *Make the Will of Hashem your will* (Avos 2:4). What Hashem wanted, that's what they wanted! They weren't merely fighting for what Hashem wanted. What Hashem wanted became their *ratzon*, their own will.

That's a tremendous achievement - to feel that we are keeping the Torah because the Will of Hashem is *our* will. Not only that we're doing Hashem's Will, but it's *our* will! **כי הם חיינו** - *The Torah is our lifeblood*. It's more than our lives. And we'll give our lives for the Torah because it's our fight, it's our will. That's one of the lessons of Chanukah - get busy making His Will your will.

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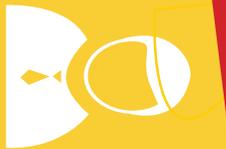
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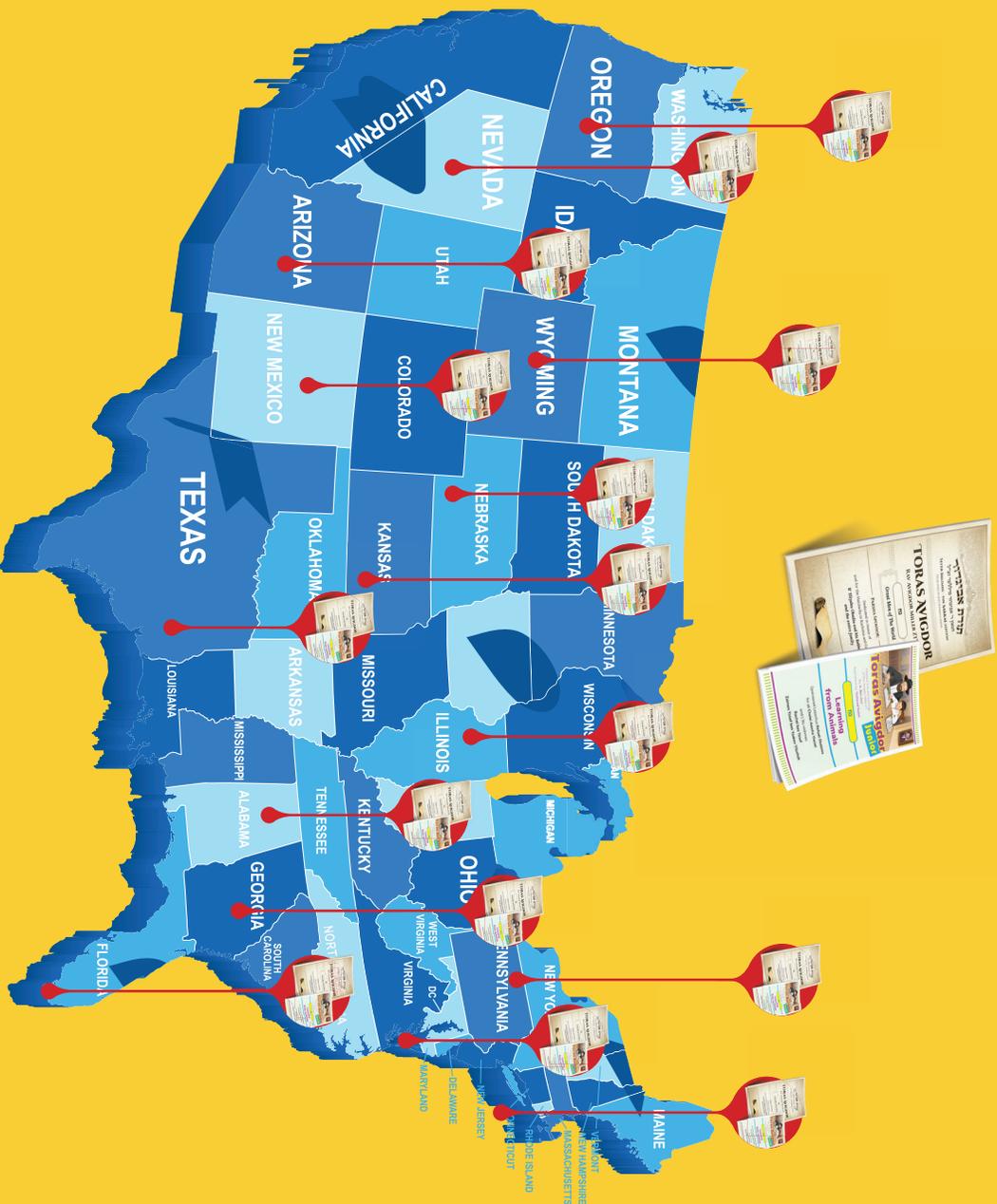


aniel lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and doesn't read the Toras Avigdor every Shabbos. **But he would like to. And so would many others in his community.** It would change their lives and the lives of their families—just like it's changed your life and the lives of thousands of others across the world. But it's not only Daniel in Santa Fe. There's Miriam in Las Vegas and Joseph in Tennessee as well. **And thousands more of our brothers and sisters in communities across the nation, who would be thrilled to have Toras Avigdor in their shuls and homes—every Shabbos.**



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**A MESSAGE
FROM OUR
DIRECTOR**

Rabbi Moshe Horowitz
Director, Toras Avigdor



I just wanted to thank you IMMENSELY for putting out such a high-quality mailer every week. I keep many of them on file and review from year to year. **I also try to send them to others who will hopefully draw chitzuk from them as I have.** Wishing all of you brachah v'hatzeleah, and may you see nachas and peiros in this world and in the next from your harbotzas Torah.

Dear Toras Avigdor Staff:

Jared

I read Toras Avigdor every week and I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. My friend used to bring me cake and Toras Avigdor every week, and I told her not to bring me the cake anymore. **Toras Avigdor is the best Shabbos treat for me. It is truly my oneg Shabbos!**

Bracha

Dear Toras Avigdor Office,

I love the way you have replicated the words and team of the Rav. I laugh aloud as I hear him speaking. I have been a talmidah of Rabbi Miller for many years and used to listen to the same tapes that I had over and over. I could almost repeat them verbatim.

With much hakaras hatov,

Nechama



I get heartwarming messages like those from Jared, Bracha, and Nechama every day.

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