



## HAVE THE WINNERS BEEN DECLARED?

We all love to celebrate Chanukah, the holiday which marks our victory over the Syrian Greeks and the miracle of the oil. Did you know that it took the sages a full year to decide whether they were victorious?

Behind the scenes in the Chanukah story.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



# JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



CHANUKAH

## Chanukah

*Dedicated in loving memory of*  
**Nosson Kershner**  
*Yartzeit, 13 Kislev*  
*and Bluma Kershner*  
*Yartzeit, 16 Kislev*  
*By their grandchildren*  
**Rabbi Nosson and Chaya Potash**  
*Shluchim of the Rebbe to S. Francisco, CA*

## Book of Genesis / Bereshit

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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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When was Chanukah established as a holiday? In the Talmud, we read an interesting statement: the holiday was not established immediately; rather, it was established the next year (Source 1).

The Rebbe points out that this was not the case on Purim, which was established immediately. Why was Chanukah different?

The (literal) answer can be culled from the ruling in Jewish law that a new law must be accepted by the population in order for it to become obligatory (Source 2). In the story of Purim, we see an initial effort to establish a holiday during which work is prohibited, but that plan was dropped (Source 3). As the Talmud explains, the Jewish population rejected the idea (Source 4).

Thus, the Rebbe explains, the sages in the story of Chanukah drew on the story of Purim and chose to wait before establishing a new holiday, to first determine public opinion.

## B. Who Won the War.....12

However, there is also a deeper reason for the wait. Chanukah is unlike Purim, in that it is a victory of the spirit. The Jews weren't threatened with death; they were forced to abandon their religion (Source 5). The Syrian Greeks tried to force the Jews to renounce Judaism (Source 6), prohibiting Jewish observance (Source 7). This wasn't only a project of the Syrian Greek conquerors; they were aided and abetted by Hellenist Jews as well (Source 8-9).

The Rebbe explains that the sages didn't merely wait a year to see which customs and observances would be established in the new holiday. They were waiting for something far more important. They wanted to see who had won the struggle. Would Jews embrace Judaism or continue assimilating and becoming Hellenists. Only at the close of the year, when the sages were confident in their spiritual and moral victory, did they establish the festival of Chanukah.

# Introduction:

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There is an old Jewish joke: All holidays have the same story: "They tried to kill us, they failed, let's eat."

You may be surprised to hear that Chanukah is more nuanced than that. The Greeks didn't try to kill us, and the Macabees didn't go to war to preserve human life. It was a culture war, a war over the soul of the Jewish people.

In this lesson, we will learn about the meaning of their fight, and about the state of the Jewish people at the time. These will give us a fascinating insight into the holiday we are about to celebrate.

**Note for teachers:** We highly recommend listening to the original Sicha [here](#).

# A. Public Opinion

## Source 1 Talmud, Tractate Shabbat 21b

What is Chanukah?

When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary. When the Hasmonean monarchy overcame them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil with the seal of the High Priest intact. There was only sufficient oil there to light the Menorah for one day, yet a miracle occurred and the Menorah remained lit for eight days.

The next year the Sages instituted these days as a holiday with the recitation of hallel and special thanksgiving [to G-d].

Rashi:

**The Sages instituted those days as holidays with recitation of hallel and special thanksgiving** - It is not forbidden to work on the holiday, as they were only designated for reciting Hallel and Al Hanisim as part of thanksgiving.

מהו חנוכה?

כְּשֶׁנִכְנסוּ יוֹנִים לְהִכָּל  
טְמֵאוּ כָּל הַשְּׁמֵנִים  
שֶׁבַּהִיכָל. וְכִשְׁגִּבְרָה  
מְלָכוֹת בֵּית חֲשִׁמוֹנָאִי  
וְנִצְחוּם, בְּדָקוּ וְלֹא מָצְאוּ  
אֶלָּא פֶּךָ אֶחָד שֶׁל שֶׁמֶן  
שֶׁהָיָה מוֹנֵחַ בְּחוֹתְמוֹ שֶׁל  
כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל, וְלֹא הָיָה בוֹ  
אֶלָּא לְהַדְלִיק יוֹם אֶחָד.  
נַעֲשֶׂה בוֹ גַם וְהַדְלִיקוּ  
מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁמוֹנֵה יָמִים.

לְשָׁנָה אַחֲרַת קְבָעוֹם  
וַעֲשָׂאוֹם יָמִים טוֹבִים  
בְּהַלֵּל וְהוֹדָאָה.

רש"י

קְבָעוֹם וַעֲשָׂאוֹם יָמִים  
טוֹבִים בְּהַלֵּל וְהוֹדָאָה  
- לֹא שְׂאֵסוּרִין  
בְּמִלְאָכָה, שֶׁלֹּא נִקְבְּעוּ  
אֶלָּא לְקִרְוַת הַלֵּל  
וְלִדְבַר עַל הַנְּסִים  
בְּהוֹדָאָה.

## >> The Rebbe

### Why Wait a Full Year?

Some Jewish holidays were established in the Torah. As the verse states, “celebrate for Me three holidays during the year” – the Torah itself established the times and the manners in which to celebrate these holidays.

Other holidays were established in our tradition; those are Purim and Chanukah.

But there is a difference between the two:

With regard to Purim, the Megillah clearly states that the war took place on the 13th of Adar, and on the very next day, the 14th, the people rested and made it a day of feasting and celebration (while the Jews of Shushan did the same a day later). In other words, the holiday was established that very year.

However, the Talmud says regarding Chanukah, “The next year the Sages instituted these days as a holiday...”

בנוגע לכללות הימים טובים - ישנם הימים טובים שהן מן התורה, כמו שכתוב<sup>1</sup> “שלש רגלים תחוג לי בשנה”, שהתורה עצמה קבעה את הזמנים ואת האופנים שבהם צריכים לחגוג ימים טובים אלו;

וישנם גם ימים טובים שהם מדברי קבלה, שזהו היום טוב דפורים והיום טוב דחנוכה.

ומצינו חילוק ביניהם:

בנוגע לפורים - מפורש במגילה שהמלחמה היתה “ביום שלשה עשר לחודש אדר”, ומיד למחרתו - “ונוח בארבעה עשר בו ועשה אותו יום משתה ושמחה” (ובשושן בחמשה עשר באדר)<sup>2</sup>, היינו, שהיום טוב היה מיד באותה שנה.

ואילו בנוגע לחנוכה - איתא בגמרא<sup>3</sup> “נעשה בו נס .. לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה”.

3 שבת כא, ב.

(1) משפטים כג, יד  
(2) אסתר ט, יז-יח.

## The Calculations

This distinction must first be explained at a literal level, and that will then lead us to understand the underlying message and lesson.

In general, we know that the sages – before enacting a new law – would check to see whether it was a decree which the people would be able to handle.

ויש לבאר חילוק זה על פי נגלה, ומזה יובן גם תוכן הענינים כפי שהם בעבודת האדם.

מצינו בנוגע לגזירות דרבנן שהיו בודקים אם זוהי גזירה שרוב הציבור יכולים לעמוד בה<sup>4</sup>

### Source 2 Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Mamrim 2:5

When a court sees it necessary to issue a decree, institute an edict, or establish a custom, they must first contemplate the matter and see whether or not the majority of the community can uphold the practice. We never issue a decree on the community unless the majority of the community can uphold the practice.

בית דין שִׁנְרָאָה לְהוֹן לְגִזֹר גְזֵרָה אוּ לְתַקֵּן תְּקֻנָּה אוּ לְהַנְהִיג מִנְהַג, צָרִיכִין לְהַתְיַשֵּׁב בְּדַבָּר, וְלִיַדַע תְּחִלָּה אִם רֵב הַצָּבוּר יְכוּלִין לְעִמֹד בָּהֶן אוּ אִם אֵין יְכוּלִין לְעִמֹד. וְלְעוֹלָם אֵין גּוֹזְרִין גְזֵרָה עַל הַצָּבוּר, אֲלֵא אִם כֵּן רֵב הַצָּבוּר יְכוּלִין לְעִמֹד בָּהֶן:

*There is a general difference between biblical commandments and rabbinic ones. When Moses commanded the Jewish nation to sacrifice the Paschal lamb, he didn't first make a "survey" to double-check whether the Jews are really interested in spending seven days eating nothing but Matzah. He simply relayed G-d's command: "For seven days you shall eat Matzos" – and that was it, period. The same is true of all other mitzvos of the Torah.*

*Rabbinic decrees, on the other hand, must go through a background check to be certain that the decree/reform is "one which the masses are capable of upholding." If the rule is not upheld by the general public, it is not obligatory (a good example of this is the ritual purity instituted by Ezra the scribe, which was ultimately not upheld. Therefore, it is an optional law until this day).*

(4) ראה ע"ז לו, סע"א. וש"נ.

## The Process to Institute Purim

### Source 3 The Megillah, 9:19–22

Therefore, the Jewish villagers who live in open towns, made the fourteenth day of the month of Adar a day of joy, feast, and a holiday, with sending presents of food to one another.

על־כֵּן הִיהוּדִים הַפְּרָזִים  
הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּעָרֵי הַפְּרָזוֹת  
עָשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבַּעָה  
עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר שְׂמֵחָה  
וּמְשֻׁלַּח יוֹם טוֹב וּמְשֻׁלַּח  
מִנּוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ:

*When the book of Esther tells us what the Jews did that year, it mentions that they celebrated with joy, feasting, and a Yom Tov, a holiday – which usually means, no working. It sounds like Passover and Sukkot.*

And Mordecai inscribed these laws and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, instructing them to make the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and the fifteenth day thereof, every year, as days when Jews rested from their enemies, and the month that was reversed for them from grief to joy and from mourning to a festive day – making them days of feasting and joy, and sending portions of food one to another, and gifts to the poor.

וַיִּכְתֹּב מֵרְדֵּכָי אֶת־  
הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּשְׁלַח  
סְפָרִים אֶל־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים  
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינוֹת הַמְּלָךְ  
אֲחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ הַקְּרוּבִים  
וְהָרְחוֹקִים. לְקַיֵּם עֲלֵיהֶם  
לְהִיּוֹת עֹשִׂים אֶת יוֹם  
אַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר  
וְאֵת יוֹם־חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ  
בְּכָל־שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה. כַּיָּמִים  
אֲשֶׁר־נָחוּ בָהֶם הַיְהוּדִים  
מֵאִיְבֵיהֶם וְהַחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר  
נִהְפָךְ לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה  
וּמֵאֲבָל לְיוֹם טוֹב לַעֲשׂוֹת  
אוֹתָם יָמֵי מְשֻׁלָּה וְשִׂמְחָה  
וּמְשֻׁלַּח מִנּוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ  
וּמִתְּנוּת לְאֲבִינָיִם.

*However, when Mordechai writes a letter to all Jews instituting the law to celebrate on this day, he only writes “feasting and joy,” omitting “Yom Tov.” Why?*



## Source 4 Talmud, Tractate Megillah 5b

Rabba, the son of Rava, once said:

The Jewish people accepted upon themselves the prohibitions against eulogizing and fasting on Purim, but they did not accept upon themselves the prohibition against performing labor.

This is proven from when Mordecai and Esther proposed the celebration of Purim; it says it was “a day of joy, feast, and a holiday” and at the end – when the celebration of Purim was accepted by the Jewish people – it says: “days of feasting and joy” whereas the term ‘holiday’ is not written. This is because the people never accepted upon themselves the prohibition against performing labor on Purim.

רבה בנו של רבא, אמר :

בעיקרו של דבר, איסור הספד ותענית ביום הפורים - קיבלו עליהם כל ישראל, אולם איסור מלאכה לא קיבלו עליהם.

וראיה לדבר, ממה שבתחילה נאמר, כשהציעו מרדכי ואסתר את החג “שמחה ומשתה ויום טוב”, ולבסוף נאמר שקיבלו לקיים עליהם “לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה”, ואילו “יום טוב” לא נאמר, הרי שלא קיבלו עליהם לאסור בו מלאכה כביום טוב.

## >> The Rebbe

### The Public Rejected the Idea

This is also true regarding the enactment of the Purim holiday: During the first Purim celebration, the details were not finalized; initially, it is mentioned as a holiday, but later, the term 'holiday' is omitted. Although Mordechai and Esther wanted to establish a holiday during which work is prohibited, the people didn't accept it; they accepted the decree against eulogies and fast days, but they did not agree to cease from work. Therefore, work is not prohibited on Purim.

ועל דרך זה גם בנוגע לעניין דיום טוב שקשור עם ביטול מלאכה - כפי שמצינו שגם בפורים לא נקבעו בשנה הראשונה כל הפרטים, שלכן, "מעיקרא כתיב<sup>5</sup> שמחה ומשתה ויום טוב, ולבסוף כתיב<sup>6</sup> לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה, ואילו יום טוב לא כתיב". מכיון שמרדכי ואסתר רצו לגזור שיהיה גם ביטול מלאכה, אך לפועל הציבור לא קיבלו זאת, - "הספד ותענית קבילו עליהו, מלאכה לא קבילו עליהו"<sup>7</sup>, ולכן נקבע שפורים מותר במלאכה.

### Purim Applied to Chanukah

With this story in mind, we can assume that when the sages decided to establish the holiday of Chanukah, they didn't set down all the customs in an explicit manner during the first year, knowing — from the story of Purim — that they community might not accept it. They waited a year, during which they determined what the community would accept and what they would not, and then they established Chanukah as a day of thanksgiving and celebration — during which work is permitted.

ומזה מובן, שכאשר חכמים עמדו לקבוע את היום טוב של חנוכה ואופנו, לא היו יכולים לקבוע בשנה הראשונה באופן של קביעות, שהרי ידעו כבר מהמעשה דפורים שיכול להיות שהציבור לא יקבלו עליהם, ורק "לשנה אחרת" (לאחרי שבמשך השנה התברר מה יקבלו הציבור ומה לא, כמו בפורים), "קבעום לימים טובים בהלל והודאה" ו"לא שאסורין במלאכה"<sup>8</sup>.

7 מגילה ה, ב.  
8 פרש"י שבת שם.

5 אסתר ט, יט.  
6 שם, כב.

*This explains why Chanukah was only instituted a full year after the great victory. The Rabbis learned from Purim to wait before jumping ahead with a new law; it must first be evaluated to determine whether the nation would accept and uphold it. This is why they waited a full year; only after extensive thought and deliberation did they go forth with the official announcement.*

## B. Who Won the War

In the second part of the talk, the Rebbe takes it one step further. He explains that the deliberations (which took an entire year to complete), weren't about the specific customs of the holiday. It took a whole year to answer a much deeper question: Was this a true victory? Are these days worth celebrating?

To understand this dilemma, we must first back up a bit and learn a bit about the history of the Jewish nation in the times of the Maccabees.

**Teacher's note:** At this point, show the following two-and-a-half-minute video. [Link](#)

### The Nature of the Conquest

#### Source 5 Levush (Cited in Taz, Orach Chaim 670:3)

The Greeks did not desire to kill Jews; they simply opposed their faith.

Purim is when Jewish lives were saved, while Chanukah is not. The Greeks did not intend to kill Jews; they just wanted them to be subjugated and to abandon their religion.

כי בפורים היה הצלת נפשות, ובחנוכה לא היה הצלת נפשות. כי היננים לא בקשו נפשות, רק ההכנעה והעברת דת.

#### Source 6 Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 2:4

This is how it is described in the Midrash:

“Darkness” alludes to the exile under the Greeks, when the eyes of the Jews were darkened by their abusive decrees; they commanded, “inscribe on the horn of your oxen that you have no part in the G-d of Israel.”

וחשך, זה גלות יון, שהחשיכה עיניהם של ישראל בגזרותיהן, שהיתה אומרת להם, כתבו על קרן השור שאין לכם חלק באלהי ישראל.

## Source 7 Megillat Taanit chapter 12

*Megillat Taanit (a chronicle listing special dates that were marked in the second Temple era) tells us about the decrees in greater detail.*

The Greek rulers enacted decrees upon the Jews, forbidding them to learn Torah, circumcise their sons, keep Shabbat – and forcing them to serve idols.

שָׁגְזְרוּ מַלְכֵי יוֹן עַל  
יִשְׂרָאֵל, שְׁלֹא יַעֲסֻקוּ  
בַתּוֹרָה, וְשְׁלֹא יְמוּלוּ אֶת  
בְּנֵיהֶם, וְשְׁלֹא יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת  
הַשַּׁבָּת, וְשִׁיעַבְדוּ עֲבוּדָה  
זָרָה.

## Source 8 Chashmonaim I, 1:14-15

*The book of Maccabees describes the phenomenon of the Hellenists (assimilated Jews) in Israel.*

At that time, wicked men arose within the nation who persuaded the people, saying:

וַיְהִי בְּעַת הַהִיא וַיֵּצְאוּ  
אֲנָשִׁים בְּנֵי-בְלִיַעֵל  
מִקְרֹב יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיְדִיחוּ אֶת  
עַם הָאָרֶץ לְאִמּוֹר.

“Let us go and make a covenant with the nations around us, because ever since we have distanced ourselves from them, we have faced terrible oppression.”

הִבֵּה נִכְרְתָה בְרִית אֶת  
הַגּוֹיִים אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֵינוּ,  
כִּי מֵאָז אֲשֶׁר סָרְנוּ  
מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם מִצְאוּנוּ צָרוֹת  
רַבּוֹת וְרָעוֹת.

The nation agreed, and sent a delegation to the king, and the king agreed and commanded them to follow the ways of Greece.

וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הָעָם,  
וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ מַלְאָכִים אֶל  
הַמֶּלֶךְ, וַיִּצְווֹה הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּיָדָם  
לָלֶכֶת בְּדַרְכֵי הַגּוֹיִים  
וּבַחֻקוֹתֵיהֶם.

They built a gymnasium in Jerusalem according to the Hellenist custom. They ceased to perform circumcision on their children, they betrayed the holy covenant, and began to do evil in the eyes of G-d.

וַיִּקְיִמוּ בַיִת מִשְׁחָק  
בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם בְּמִשְׁפַּט  
הַגּוֹיִים, וְלֹא מָלוּ עוֹד אֶת  
בְּנֵיהֶם, וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֶת בְּרִית  
הַקּוֹדֶשׁ לָלֶכֶת בְּחֻקוֹתָם,  
וַיִּתְמַכְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע  
בְּעֵינֵי ה'.

## Source 9 Makabim II, 4:8-17

The book of Maccabees speaks about the political events that led to this and gives us a clearer picture of the great influence Hellenism had on the youth and the masses in Jerusalem.

When Seleucid died and the empire was passed on to Antiochus the great, Jason, brother of Onias the high priest, attempted to take over his brother's place. He told the king, "If you give me the high priesthood, I will give you three hundred sixty kikar [12,312 kg.] of silver as payment, and another eighty kikar from donations of other people. In addition, I will pay one hundred fifty kikar of silver if you help me install a gymnasium in Jerusalem where we will educate the youth, and they will have the same law as the rest of the Antiochia empire."

When the king agreed to everything he asked, and he was in command, he convinced the Jews to go in the ways of Greece. He violated all the good laws that were given to Jews from the previous kings, through Yochanan, the son of Apollimus – the Apollimus who was sent to Rome to broker a peace deal with Rome's elders. He eliminated G-d's commandments and replaced them with abominations. He built a gymnasium below the city of David, and he commanded all the young and able to play with a covering on their face. He spread the laws of the Greeks

וַיְהִי בְּעֵת הַהִיא וַיָּמָת  
סְלִיקוֹס, וְהַמְּלָכָה עֲבָרָה  
לְאַנְטִיּוֹכוֹס הַמְּפּוֹאֵר, וַיִּקְּם  
יִשׁוּעַ אַחֵי חוֹנִיּוֹ וַיִּבְקֹשׁ  
אֶת עֲבוֹדַת הַכְּהוֹנָה.  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אִם נָתוֹן  
תִּיתֶנּוּ אֶת מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַכְּהוֹנָה  
עַל יָדַי, וְשָׂקַלְתִּי שְׁלוֹשׁ  
מֵאוֹת וְשִׁשִּׁים כִּיכָר כֶּסֶף  
בְּמַחֲרָה, וְעוֹד שְׁמוֹנִים  
כִּיכָר מִתְּרוֹמוֹת הָאָרֶץ.  
וּמִלְבַּד זֹאת אוֹסִיף לָךְ  
עוֹד חֲמִישִׁים וּמֵאָה כִּיכָר  
כֶּסֶף, בְּתִתֶנְךָ לִי יָד לְהִקָּים  
בְּתִי מִשְׁחָק בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם  
לְחַנֵּךְ בְּתוֹכָם אֶת הַנְּעָרִים,  
וּמִשְׁפָּט אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לָהֶם  
וּלְיוֹשְׁבֵי אֲנִיטִיּוֹכִיָּא.

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר נָתַן לוֹ  
הַמֶּלֶךְ כָּכֹל אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַל,  
וְהַמְּמִשְׁלָה נִכְוֶנָה בְּיָדוֹ,  
וַיִּנְיֵא אֶת לִבָּב הָעָם  
לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְכֵי הַיִּוֹנִים.  
וַיִּפְּרֹ אֶת כָּל הַחֻּקִּים  
הַטּוֹבִים אֲשֶׁר נָתַנוּ לָהֶם  
מִן הַמְּלָכִים לְפָנָיו עַל יַד  
יוֹחָנָן אֲבִי אֶפּוֹלִימוֹס, הוּא  
אֶאֱפּוֹלִימוֹס אֲשֶׁר שׁוֹלַח  
לְרוֹמָא לְכָרוֹת בְּרִית אֶת  
זְקַנְיָהּ. וַיִּסֶּר אֶת חֻקֵי  
ה' וַיִּשֶׂם חֻקֵי תוֹעֵבוֹת

across the city, an abomination of Jason the wicked one, who did not have rights to the priestly service. All the priests abandoned the work of the altar and the sacrifices, shamed the Temple, and hurried to the gymnasium to meander and groan with a spear and shield, and to play ball games. They viewed their ancestors' ways as futile and void, and they promoted and praised the ways of Greece.

תַּחַתָּם. וַיִּבְנוּ בַּיִת מִשְׁחָק  
מִתַּחַת לְעִיר דָּוִד כְּהַפְצוֹ,  
וַיֵּצְאוּ לְכָל בַּחוּרֵי כוֹחַ  
לְשָׂחֹק בּוֹ בְּמִסְנוֹהַ עַל  
פְּנֵיהֶם.

וַיִּפְרְצוּ חֻקוֹת הַיּוֹנִים עַל  
פְּנֵי כָּל הָעִיר בְּתוֹעֵבַת  
יִשׁוּעַ הַבְּלִיַּעַל, אֲשֶׁר לֹא  
הָיָה לוֹ מִשְׁפָּט הַכְּהוֹנָה.  
כִּי גַם הַכּוֹהֲנִים עָזְבוּ  
אֶת עֲבוֹדַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
וְאֶת הַקּוֹרְבָּנוֹת, וַיְבוֹזוּ  
אֶת הַקּוֹדֶשׁ, וַיִּחַפְּזוּ  
לְלַכֵּת אֶל בַּיִת הַמִּשְׁחָק  
לְהַתְּפִיל וּלְהַתְּגַנֵּחַ בְּחַנִּית  
נְרוֹמָת, וּלְשָׂחֹק בְּשָׂחֹק  
הַפְּדוּרִים. וַיִּחָשְׁבוּ אֶת  
דְּרָכֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם לְהִבָּל  
נְרִיק, וַיִּנְשְׂאוּ וַיְהַלְלוּ אֶת  
דְּרָכֵי הַיּוֹנִים.

## >> The Rebbe

### Did the Jews Really Win?

The *Levush* writes in his Laws of Chanukah (as cited in Chassidic teachings) that there is a difference between Chanukah and Purim. Purim was a “bodily” salvation; the decree was to annihilate all Jewish people, and the miracle was that they were saved when the situation turned over and they overpowered their enemies. Chanukah, on the other hand, was a spiritual decree; they tried to force us to forget G-d's Torah and abandoned His laws. The miracle, therefore, was that this spiritual decree was abolished.

ידוע מה שכתב הלבוש (הובא בט"ז) בהלכות חנוכה<sup>9</sup>, והובא בדרושי חסידות<sup>10</sup>, בביאור החילוק שבין חנוכה לפורים - שהנס דפורים הי' הצלת הגוף, שהרי הגזירה היתה "להשמיד להרוג ולאבד את כל היהודים"<sup>11</sup>, והנס הי' להצלת הגוף, ש"ונהפוך הוא אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשונאיהם"<sup>12</sup>; מה שאין כן בחנוכה שהיתה גזירה רוחנית - "להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחוקי רצונך" והנס הי' שבטלה גזירה רוחנית זו.

This difference is reflected in the way the two holidays were established.

When a physical decree is annulled, the result is immediately visible. In the story of Purim, the Jews overpowered their enemies on the very day they were supposed to be annihilated; instead of their own annihilation, their enemies were killed. In other words, the miracle was immediately apparent as an established fact.

But in a case of spiritual persecution such as the story of Chanukah, it is more difficult to determine the end of the persecution.

The oppression of Judaism didn't come only from non-Jews; Jews were involved as well. The ability to outlaw Judaism is only possible when it also stems from within the Jewish community itself. In this case, it was the presence of Hellenists among the Jews that gave the Greek government the ability to order the Jews to forget G-d's Torah and abandon his laws.

Even after they found the pure olive oil and the menorah burned for eight days straight, the sages could not have known how it would impact the world: Did the light penetrate the windows of the Temple and reach the population? Was it welcomed by the community? Did it neutralize the Hellenistic elements within the Jewish community?

ובהתאם לכך יש נפקא-מינה בנוגע לקביעת היום טוב:

כאשר מדובר אודות ביטול גזירה גשמית - רואים זאת מיד על אתר, וכפי שהיה בפורים, ש"ביום אשר שברו אויבי היהודים לשלוט בהם - ונהפוך הוא אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשונאיהם"<sup>13</sup>, "והרוג בשונאיהם גו"<sup>14</sup>, ואם כן ראו מיד שישנו נס, וכבר נקבע במעשה בפועל, למטה מעשרה טפחים.

מה שאין כן כאשר מדובר אודות גזירה רוחנית, כמו הגזירה דחנוכה, והוצרכו לידע אם בטלה הגזירה,

- לא רק מצד אומות העולם, אלא גם מצד בני ישראל, שכן, האפשרות לגזור גזירה על בני ישראל אינה אלא כאשר ישנם "מהרסיך ומחריביך (ש) ממך יצאו"<sup>15</sup>, ובנדון דידן, שכיון שאצל בני ישראל היו "מתיוונים", לכן היתה מלכות יון יכולה לגזור גזירה "להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחוקי רצונך" -

הנה גם כאשר מצאו שמן טהור, "והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים"<sup>16</sup>, עדיין לא היו יכולים לידע מה נעשה בעולם: עד כמה חדר האור בעולם (על ידי "חלוני שקופים אטומים"<sup>17</sup> שבבית-המקדש), ואם נתקבל אצל הציבור, עד שנתבטלו "מהרסיך ומחריביך" - שאז בטוחים שבטלה הגזירה,



Therefore, the holiday was established a year later. It took a full 12 months, with the passage of winter and summer and the full gamut of the yearly cycle, to determine that the light of the pure olive oil in the Temple had been embraced and established within the Jewish community. Then, they established the holiday of Chanukah for all generations, to be celebrated until the coming of Moshiach – seeing that the miracle had spread beyond the Temple, penetrating the diaspora and the exile.

ולכן, רק "לשנה אחרת" - לאחרי שעברו י"ב חודש, שנה שלימה, שיש בה כל השינויים האפשריים ד"זרע וקציר וקור וחום וקיץ וחורף גו' לא ישבותו"<sup>18</sup>, וראו שהאור מהשמן הטהור שהדליקו בבית-המקדש נתקבל והחזיק מעמד בכל הציבור - אזי "קבעום לימים טובים בהלל והודאה", באופן של קביעות על כל הדורות, "עד מלך המשיח", כיון שהנס נמשך חוץ למקדש, ובחוץ לארץ, בזמן הגלות.

משיחת י"ב תמוז, ה'תשט"ז. רשימת

השומעים בלתי מוגה  
תורת מנחם, חלק י"ז עמוד 48.