



## THE FEMININE SIDE OF CHANUKAH

Who was the young woman who kindled the fire of rebellion of the Maccabees? Who was the woman whose resourcefulness helped the Maccabees win? And why did women suffer more than anyone else under Greek rule?

**TEACHER'S MANUAL**



# JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



**CHANUKAH**



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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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Women are exempt from positive time-constrained commandments of doing (Source 1), the reason being, that they are more spiritual.

If so, the Rebbe asks, why are women obligated to observe the commandment of lighting Chanukah candles (Source 2)? The Rebbe explains that because the decree was also about women, and the victory was, as well, achieved by a woman, therefore, the women are also obligated in it.

The Midrash details the deep involvement of women in the decrees of the Greeks, and in the victory of the Maccabees (Source 3).

## B. Is a Suicide Mission Allowed?.....12

Who allowed the Maccabees to sacrifice their lives? Maimonides specifies that the Jew must sacrifice his life only for three specific serious transgressions, and for all the rest - he must transgress and not be killed (Source 4). According to these rules, apparently the Jewish people at the time of the Chanukah miracle were not supposed to sacrifice their lives.

However, during a period of religious persecution, one must give up their life even for a minor mitzvah (Source 5), but this is only when the gentile come to the Jew and forces him to violate a prohibition, it is not intended that he should preemptively go out on a suicide mission against the world's most powerful empire.

## C. National Sanctity.....15

The Rebbe explains that when there are decrees against matters concerning the purity of the family and the nation, there is no room for logical considerations, as the Kesef Mishneh establishes (Source 6). The women were the ones who evoked this feeling among the Jewish people, and therefore they were the ones who brought about the ultimate victory.

Since the self-sacrifice of the Jewish people was irrational, so too the miracle - the reward - was beyond nature, a victory of the few against the many, and the miracle of the jug of oil.

Why did they need the miracle of the jug of oil? After all, according to Jewish law, it is permissible to light a fire with impure oil in such a situation! (Source 7). The Rebbe explains that since the Jewish people sacrificed themselves in a manner that was beyond the letter of the law, G-d performed a miracle for them, beyond the letter of the law, so that they could light with pure oil.

## Introduction

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The Jewish people rebel against the ruler who wants to defile a Jewish girl on her wedding night, killing him, his ministers and his servants. As a result, the city of Jerusalem is besieged. A Jewish woman asks to leave the besieged city. In her heart is a dangerous ruse that could cost her her life.

Who was this woman, what did she want to do, was she actually able to carry out this dangerous operation, and what does this all mean to us?

A lesson on dedication, self-sacrifice, and going the “extra mile”.

### השיעור לחג החנוכה

משיחת ליל נר חמישי דחנוכה, בעת הקבלת פנים, ה'תשי"ב  
הנחה בלתי מוגה  
תורת מנחם חלק ד' עמ' רלב

# A. Women and Chanukah

## Source 1 Talmud, Kiddushin 29a

### The mitzvot that don't obligate women

Student's  
pg. 3

All positive, time-bound mitzvot are obligatory for men, but not women. All positive mitzvot that are not time bound are obligatory for both men and women. All prohibitions, whether they are time-bound or not, are obligatory for both men and women.

כָּל מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁהִזְמַן גְּרָמָא -  
אֲנָשִׁים חִיבִין, וְנָשִׁים פְּטוּרוֹת,  
וְכָל מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁלֹּא הִזְמַן גְּרָמָא  
- אֶחָד הָאֲנָשִׁים וְאֶחָד הַנָּשִׁים  
חִיבִין. וְכָל מִצְוֹת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה,  
בֵּין שֶׁהִזְמַן גְּרָמָא בֵּין שֶׁלֹּא הִזְמַן  
גְּרָמָא - אֶחָד הָאֲנָשִׁים וְאֶחָד  
הַנָּשִׁים חִיבִין.

Women must only observe the positive commandments whose application is not limited to specific times. For example, Tefillin are layed only during the day and not at night, so women are exempt. The commandment of the Sukkah is for specific dates - the 15th-22nd of Tishrei, and women are therefore exempt from this mitzvah as well.

In contrast, the grace after meals is a commandment that has no specific slot in the Hebrew calendar, therefore, women must also bless after eating bread. The same goes for the commandment of honoring parents, etc.

Why are women exempt from a large part of the commandments?

The Rebbe explains in a talk (Likkutei Sichos Vol. 26 p. 267), that this is because women's faith in G-d is naturally much stronger than men's, and they therefore don't need to be commanded as much. The Torah trusts them to do the right thing, even without a command.

## >> The Rebbe

### Women Are Obligated In The Mitzvah Of Chanukah Candles

Student's  
pg. 3

The mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles obligates women as well, as the Talmud states, "women are obligated to kindle Chanukah candles because they were part of that miracle."

במצות הדלקת נרות חנוכה מצינו  
שגם נשים מחויבות בה, כפי שכתוב  
בגמרא<sup>1</sup> "נשים חייבות בנר חנוכה  
שאף הן היו באותו הנס".

ושני פרטים בזה:

There are two elements to this:

A. "The decree was especially aimed against them," as Maimonides says,

(א) "הגזירה הייתה מאד עליהן"<sup>2</sup>,  
וכלשון הרמב"ם<sup>3</sup> "פשוטו ידם

“the Greeks stole their money and their women.” Rashi also explains this.

B. The salvation from the decree came about through a woman.

For this reason women are obligated to light the Chanukah candles even though it is a time-bound mitzvah from which women are usually exempt.

*Based on what we learned earlier it seems that women should not be obligated to light Chanukah candles. The mitzvah to light candles every night for eight nights is time bound, and women are generally exempt from such mitzvot. Yet, the reality is that Jewish law obligates women to light Chanukah candles as well, just as men are obligated.*

*The Rebbe quotes the Talmud that explains that an exception was made for Chanukah candles because the decree also affected the women, and the victory came through women. The women’s central role in the story of the festival creates an obligation in its mitzvah.*

*We will now study the sources and learn which aspect of the decree specifically targeted the women, and who was the woman who brought about the victory.*

## Source 2 Talmud, Shabbat 23a

Student’s  
pg. 4

As Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Women are obligated in lighting the Chanukah light, as they too were included in that miracle.

### Rashi

**Were in that miracle:** Since the Greeks decreed upon all the women getting married that they must first cohabit with the Greek officer. In addition, the miracle happened through a woman.

“They were in that miracle”, is a principle that excludes certain time constrained commandments from the usual exemption for women, and instead obligates women in them just like men. The reasoning is that these commandments are intended to commemorate special miracles performed for the entire Jewish people – both men and women. The Talmud gives examples for this: The commandment of drinking four cups of wine at the Seder table, the commandment of listening to the reading of the Megillah on Purim, and lighting Chanukah candles.

בממונם ובבנותיהם, וכמבואר בפירוש רש"י<sup>4</sup>. (ב) ההצלה מהגזירה נעשתה על ידי אשה<sup>5</sup>.

ומפני זה - אף שמצות נר חנוכה היא מצות עשה שהזמן גרמא, וכל מצות עשה שהזמן גרמא נשים פטורות ממנה<sup>6</sup> - מחויבות בה גם הנשים.

דָאָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן לֵוִי: נָשִׁים חַיִּיבוֹת בְּנֵר חֲנוּכָה שְׂאֵף הֵן הָיוּ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַנֵּס.

רש"י

הָיוּ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַנֵּס: שְׁגָזְרוּ יְוֹנִים עַל כָּל בְּתוּלוֹת הַנְּשׂוֹאוֹת לְהַבְעִיל לְטַפְסָר תַּחֲלָה וְעַל יַד אִשָּׁה נִעְשָׂה הַנֵּס.

(5) רש"י, ר"ן ותוס' שם. ועוד. וראה אנציק' תלמודית ערך חנוכה (ע' רמז) וש"נ.  
(6) קדושין כט, א.

(1) שבת כג, א.  
(2) תוד"ה שאף – מגילה ד, א.  
(3) ריש הל' חנוכה.  
(4) שבת שם (ד"ה היו). וכן בר"ן שם (ד"ה שאף). ועוד.

## Source 3 Otzar Midrashim, Midrash Chanukah

### The decrees of the Greeks

Student's  
pg. 4

The sages taught: During the days of the wicked Greek empire, they decreed upon the Jewish people:

1. Anyone who has a bolt in his house should engrave on it that the haters of Israel (a euphemism for the Jews) have no share in the G-d of Israel. The Jewish people immediately went and uprooted the bolts from their houses.

2. They further decreed that everyone who owns an ox should write on its horn that the haters of Israel have no part in the G-d of Israel. The Jewish people went and sold their oxen.

3. They further decreed that the men should cohabit with their wives while they were in a state of niddah, The Jewish people went and separated from their wives.

*(This was probably done by shuttering the mikvahs. Thus, the Jewish people were forced to live in celibacy. Similar events happened several times throughout history. For example, in the Soviet Union the Jewish branch of the Communist Party closed the mikvahs on health pretexts, and couples were forced to live separately for long periods of time).*

*The Seleucids tried to force the Greek Hellenistic culture upon the Jewish people. They admired the wisdom of the Jews, but despised faith in G-d as a source of authority that obliges people to specific forms of behavior, i.e. the commandments.*

*They enacted draconian laws with the aim of rooting out the commandments from the Jewish people. They forced every homeowner to write on the door bolt a prominent inscription declaring their disbelief in G-d - the Jewish people in response removed the bolts from their houses.*

*When the Greeks amended the law and applied it to the horns of the oxen, the Jewish people got rid of their oxen. And so on, the Jewish people kept finding creative solutions to avoid transgressing commandments without breaking the Greek law.*

*But then the Greeks came up with a particularly vicious and nasty decree:*

4. They further decreed that before anyone marries a woman, the woman must first cohabit with the ruler, and only then be given to her husband.

תנו רבנן, בימי מלכות יון הרשעה  
גזרו על ישראל:

1. שכל מי שיש לו בריח בתוך  
ביתו יחקק עליו שאין לשונאי  
ישראל (בלשון סגי נהור) חלק  
ונחלה באלוקי ישראל, מיד  
הלכו ישראל ועקרו בריחים  
שבבתיהם.

2. ועוד גזרו שכל מי שיש לו  
שור יכתב על קרנו שאין לשונאי  
ישראל חלק באלוקי ישראל,  
הלכו ישראל ומכרו שוריהם.

3. ועוד גזרו עליהם שיהיו בועלין  
נשיהן נדות, הלכו ישראל ופרשו  
מנשיהן.

4. ועוד גזרו שכל מי שנושא  
אשה תבעל להגמון תחלה ואחר  
כך תחזור לבעלה.

## The Protest Of The Maccabees' Sister

They practiced this for three years and eight months until the daughter of Yochanan the high priest was married. When they wanted to take her to that ruler, she exposed her head and tore her clothes in front of the people. Judah and his brothers were outraged by her conduct and they said: take her out to be burned. She then said to him: I would rather be humiliated in front of my brothers and friends than be humiliated in the eyes of this impure person, that you wish to violate me by abandoning me to lie with him.

וְנִהְיָו בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים  
וְשְׁמוֹנֶה חֳדָשִׁים עַד שְׁנִשְׂאָת בְּתוּ  
שָׁל יוֹחָנָן כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל. כִּיּוֹן שָׂרְצוּ  
לְהוֹלִיכָהּ אֶצְלֵ אוֹתוֹ הַהֶגְמוֹן  
פָּרְעָה רֵאשָׁה וְקִרְעָה בְּגָדֶיהָ בְּפָנֵי  
הָעָם, מִיַּד נִתְמַלְא יְהוּדָה וְאָחִיו  
חֲמָה עָלֶיהָ וְאָמְרוּ "הוֹצִיאֶנָּה  
לְשַׂרְפָּה". אַז אָמְרָה לוֹ: "הֵיאֵךְ  
אֶתְבַּזֶּה לְפָנֵי אָחִי וְרַעִי, וְלֹא  
אֶתְבַּזֶּה בְּעֵינֵי עַרְל וְטִמְאָ שְׂאֵתָם  
רוֹצִים לְמַעַל בִּי וְלְהוֹלִיךְ אוֹתִי  
לְשֹׁכֵב אֶצְלוֹ?"

*This criminal practice of taking the bride to the ruler continued for more than three and a half years, and the people lowered their heads and surrendered. What chance did they have against the greatest power in the world? (Some claim that this was a common practice of rulers in many places to demonstrate their power).*

*When the high priest's daughter was about to be married, the same fate awaited her... Everyone gathered for the wedding feast knowing what would happen, and no one did anything. But that Jewish woman did something radical that awakened everyone and ignited in them the fighting spirit that would lead to the great rebellion.*

## The Beginning of The Uprising

When Judah and his colleagues heard this they conspired together to kill the ruler. They immediately dressed the young woman in royal clothing and made a canopy of myrtle from the Hasmonean house to the house of the ruler. There were harpists, fiddlers, and singers, and they sang and danced until they came to the ruler's house. When the ruler heard this, he said to his ministers and his servants, look at these people, from the greatest of Israel, and from the descendants of Aaron the priest, how happy they are to do my will! They are worthy of great honor! He ordered his ministers and servants to leave. Judah and his companions entered the ruler's house with his sister and they cut off his head and plundered all his belongings. They killed his ministers and servants and completely obliterated the Greeks, except for the main part of the kingdom.

כִּיּוֹן שָׁשְׁמַע יְהוּדָה וְחַבְרָיו כֵּן  
נוֹעְצוּ יַחְדָּיו לְהַרְגֵ הַהֶגְמוֹן. מִיַּד  
הִלְבִּישׁוּ הַנְּעֻרָה בְּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת  
וְעָשׂוּ חֲפָה שֶׁל הַדָּס מִבֵּית  
חֲשֻׁמוֹנָאִי עַד בֵּיתוֹ שֶׁל הַהֶגְמוֹן,  
וּבְאֵין כָּל בְּעָלֵי נֶבֶל וְכַנּוֹר וּבְעָלֵי  
זָמֵר וְהָיוּ מְזַמְרִים וּמְרַקְדִים עַד  
שָׁבְאוּ לְבֵית הַהֶגְמוֹן. כִּיּוֹן שָׁשְׁמַע  
הַהֶגְמוֹן כֵּן אָמַר לְשָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו  
"רְאוּ אוֹתָם שֶׁהֵם מִגְּדוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
מְזַרְעֵ אֲהָרֹן הַכֹּהֵן, כִּמְהָ הֵם  
שְׂמֵחִים לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנִי. רְאוּיִים  
הֵם לְכַבּוֹד גָּדוֹל". וְצִנָּה לְהוֹצִיא  
חוּץ שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו וְנִכְנַס יְהוּדָה  
וְחַבְרָיו עִם אֲחֹתוֹ אֶצְלֵ הַהֶגְמוֹן  
וְחָתְכוּ רֵאשׁוֹ וּבָזְזוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ.  
וְהָרְגוּ שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו וְדָרְסוּ הַיּוֹנִים  
עַד גְּמִירָא חוּץ מֵעֶקֶר הַמַּלְכוּת.



## The Greek Army Goes Into Action

The Jewish people back in the city were trembling in fear for those Jewish men. A heavenly voice emerged and proclaimed: "The young men who went to fight in Antiocha won." The fighters returned and closed the gates and did penance and engaged in Torah and charitable deeds.

When the king of the Greeks heard that the Jewish people killed his representative, he gathered his entire nation and laid siege to Jerusalem, causing the Jewish people to be very afraid.

וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁהָיוּ בְּעִיר הָיוּ בְּרִתָּת  
וּבְרָעַד בְּשָׁבִיל אוֹתָם בַּחוּרֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל. יִצְאָה בַת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה,  
"נִצְחוּ הַצְּעִירִים שֶׁהָלְכוּ לְהִלָּחֵם  
בְּאַנְטִיּוֹכְיָה". וַחֲזְרוּ אוֹתָם  
בַּחוּרִים וְסָגְרוּ הַשַּׁעֲרִים וַעֲשׂוּ  
תְּשׁוּבָה וַעֲסָקוּ בַתּוֹרָה וּבַגְּמִילוּת  
חֻסְדִּים.

כִּינּוּ שֶׁשָּׁמַע מֶלֶךְ יוֹנִים שֶׁהָרְגוּ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל הַגְּמוֹן שָׁלוּ, קִבֵּץ כָּל עַמּוֹ  
וּבָא לִפְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם וְהֵבִיא אוֹתָהּ  
בְּמִצּוֹר, וְנִפְתְּחוּ מְאֹד הַיְהוּדִים.

Student's  
pg. 6

## Judith's Heroism

There was a widow named Judith who took her maidservant and went to the gates of Jerusalem. She said to the guards: let me go out, perhaps G-d will do a miracle through me. They opened the gates for her and she went out. She went before the king, and he said to her, what would you like? And she said, master! I am a daughter of great Jewish people, and my brothers are prophets. I heard them prophesying that tomorrow Jerusalem will fall into your hands. When the king heard this, he rejoiced greatly. The king believed Judith and fell in love with her, and said to her, would you like to marry me? And she said to him, my lord the king, I am not worthy of even one of your servants, but since your heart is so inclined, make a proclamation throughout the camp that anyone who sees two women walking by the spring should not harm them, as I must go there to bathe and immerse myself. Immediately the proclamation was sent out and that is what she did. The king followed by making a great feast, and the people drank and became inebriated.

וְהִיְתָה שֵׁם אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה, יְהוּדִית  
שְׁמָהּ. וְלָקְחָהּ שִׁפְחָתָהּ וְהִלְכָה  
אֶצְל שַׁעֲרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאָמְרָה,  
"הֲנִיחוּ אוֹתִי לְיָצֵאת שָׁמָּה יַעֲשֶׂה  
הַמֶּקוּם גַּם עַל יָדִי", וּפְתַחוּ לָהּ  
וַיִּצְאָהּ, וְהִלְכָה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, וַיֹּאמֶר  
לָהּ "מָה תִּבְקְשִׁי?" וְאָמְרָה "אֲדוֹנָי!  
בַּת גְּדוֹלִים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֲנֹכִי וְאֲחֵי  
נְבִיאִים. וְשָׁמַעְתִּי שֶׁהָיוּ מִתְּנַבְּאִים  
שֶׁמָּחַר תִּפֹּל יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּיַדְךָ". כִּינּוּ  
שֶׁשָּׁמַע כֶּךָ שֶׁמַּח שִׁמְחָה גְּדוֹלָה.  
וְהָיָה הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵאַמִּין לְאוֹתָהּ  
יְהוּדִית וַיֶּאֱהַב אוֹתָהּ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ,  
"רְצוֹנְךָ שֶׁתִּנָּשְׂאִי לִי?" וְאָמְרָה  
לוֹ, "אֲדוֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינִי רְאוּיָה  
אֶפְיָלוּ לְאַחַד מֵעַבְדֶּיךָ, וְאַמְנָם  
כִּינּוּ שֶׁלְּבַבְךָ נוֹטֶה לְזֶה תַעֲבִיר כְּרוֹז  
בְּכָל הַמַּחֲנֶה שֶׁכָּל מִי שִׁירְאָה  
שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים הוֹלְכוֹת אֶצְל הַמַּעַיִן  
אֵל פְּגָעוּ בָהֶן, לִפִּי שֶׁצְּרִיכָה אֲנִי  
לִילֵךְ לְשֵׁם לְרַחֵץ עֲצָמֵי וְלִטְבֹּל".  
מִיד הֶעֱבִירוּ הַכְּרוֹז וַעֲשֶׂתָה כֶּךָ,  
וַעֲשֶׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֶּה גְּדוֹל וְשָׂתוּ  
וְנִשְׁכְּרוּ.

## Tidings At The City Gates

They each went to their tents and the king went to sleep. Judith followed him and took his sword, cut off his head and spread a sheet over it. She went with the king's head to the gates of Jerusalem and said, "Open the gates for me, for G-d has already done a miracle through me." They said to her, is it not enough that you defiled yourself, but you are coming to us with a conspiracy? Immediately she showed them the head of the king, and as soon as they saw it, they opened the gates and proclaimed loudly: Hear O Israel, G-d is our L-rd, G-d is one (Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad).

ואחר כן הלכו כל אחד ואחד  
לאהלו והמלך ישב וישן, והלכה  
אותה יהודית ונטלה סיה שלו  
וחתכה ראשו ופשטה סדיו עליו,  
והלכה עם ראשו של מלך אצל  
שערי ירושלים ואמרה, "פתחו  
לי השערים שכבר עשה הקב"ה  
נס על ידי". אמרו לה, "לא דיך  
שקלקלת אלא שבאת בעלילה  
עמנו". מיד הראה להם ראשו של  
מלך, כיון שראוהו פתחו השערים  
ויצאו והרימו קול "שמע ישראל  
ה' אלקינו ה' אחד".

Student's  
pg. 7

## The Enemies Flee

When the Greeks heard this, they said "soon they will be coming for us." They went to the king and found him headless. A terror and fear fell upon them and they all fled. The Jewish people pursued them and killed many of them. So may the Almighty take revenge on our enemies, speedily, and grant us salvation, as is written, "And a redeemer shall come to Zion."

כיון ששמעו יונים כן, אמרו  
למחרת באים עלינו, והלכו  
למלך ומצאוהו בלא ראש ונפל  
עליהם אימה ופחד וברחו כלם,  
וירדפו ישראל אחריהם והרגו  
מהם כמה וכמה. כן יעשה הקב"ה  
נקמה בשונאינו מהרה ויחיש לנו  
ישועה כפתוב ובא לציון גואל.

*In summary, the midrash lays out how significant the women were in the Chanukah story. They were the main victims of the Greek occupation; It was a young woman who awakened the spirit of honor in her brothers and encouraged them to rebel; And it was a woman who courageously killed the Greek commander and brought about a victory. They were also the primary beneficiaries of the victory: the overwhelming defeat of the Greek military brought about the end of the Jewish women's nightmare. Abuse of women stopped, and they could marry their husbands without fear.*

*Therefore, even though time-constrained commandments generally do not apply to women, the commandment of Chanukah was made an exception due to the women's central role in the holiday story.*

*This is the historical background.*

## >> The Rebbe

Student's  
pg. 7

We will now explain the deeper reason for why the salvation of Chanukah came about specifically through a woman, thereby obligating women in the mitzvah.

ויש לבאר טעם הדבר (בפנימיות הענינים) שההצלה של נס חנוכה באה על ידי אישה דווקא (שלכן מחויבות - כאמור - בהדלקת נר חנוכה).

*In the next sections of the address, the Rebbe will explain the reason why events occurred in this way and the lesson we can learn from it.*

## B. Is a Suicide Mission Allowed?

Student's  
pg. 8

### >> The Rebbe

#### Who Allowed Them To Risk Their Lives?

First we must address the question of the Jewish people risking their lives in the war against the Greeks. According to Jewish law it seems that they were not obligated to risk their lives because the Greek decrees didn't affect any of the cardinal sins which we are obligated to risk our lives to avoid violating.

ובהקדמה<sup>7</sup> - שלכאורה אינו מובן טעם מסירת נפשם של בני ישראל במלחמתם נגד היוונים, שהרי, על פי דין לא היו בני ישראל מחויבים, לכאורה, במסירות נפש זו, כי, גזירת היוונים היתה<sup>8</sup> על מצוות שחל עליהן הדין של "יעבור ואל יהרג".

#### Source 4 Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, Yesodei Hatorah 5:1

#### Transgress And Do Not Get Killed

Student's  
pg. 8

The entire Jewish people are commanded regarding the sanctification of G-d's great name, as the verse states: (Leviticus 22:32) "And I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel." Also, they are warned against desecrating it, as the verse states: (Ibid) "And they shall not desecrate My holy name."

What is implied? Should a gentile arise and force a Jew to violate one of the Torah's commandments on pain of death, he should violate the commandment rather than be killed, because the verse states concerning the commandments: (Leviticus 18:5) "which a person will perform and live by them." They were given so that one may live by them and not die because of them. If a person dies rather than transgress, he is held accountable for his life.

כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מְצִוּין עַל קְדוּשַׁת הַשֵּׁם הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (ויקרא כב, לב) "וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל". וּמִזְהָרִין שְׂלֵא לְחַלְלוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (ויקרא כב, לב) "וְלֹא תַחֲלִלוּ אֶת שֵׁם קְדוֹשִׁי". בְּיַצֵּד. כְּשֵׁי־עַמֵּד עוֹבֵד כּוֹכָבִים וְיֶאֱנֹס אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַבֵּר עַל אַחַת מִכָּל מִצְוֹת הָאֱמוּרוֹת בְּתוֹרָה אוֹ יִהְרָגוּ, יַעֲבֹר וְאֵל יִהְרַג שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּמִצְוֹת (ויקרא יח, ה) "אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָם הָאָדָם נְחִי בָהֶם". נְחִי בָהֶם וְלֹא שְׂיָמוּת בָהֶם. וְאִם מֵת וְלֹא עָבַר הָרִי זֶה מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ.

"Be killed and don't transgress" is a halachic instruction for a person who is required to choose between two options: To sin or die. A Jew must sacrifice his or her life rather than transgress.

But this obligation only applies when at stake is one of the three sins of idolatry, forbidden relations,

8) ראה מגילת אנטיוכוס. אוצר מדרשים (אייזענשטיין) ע' 190 ואילך.  
9) סנהדרין עד, א. רמב"ם הל' יסודות רפ"ה. טוש"ע י"ד ר"ס קנז.

7) בהבא לקמן - ראה גם ד"ה וישב יעקב (לעיל ע' 205). לקויש חל"ה ע'  
172 ואילך.

or murder. The Torah has 365 negative commandments prohibiting certain things and yet, with the exception of the three offenses mentioned above, a life comes first, even at the painful expense of committing a sin.

This begs the question, how were the Maccabees allowed to embark on a hopeless rebellion and risk their lives for the observance of the Torah and mitzvot? The Torah itself states that physical danger overrides the entire Torah!

## >> The Rebbe

### During A Period Of Religious Persecution We Must Give Our Lives

Student's  
pg. 9

The aforementioned distinction between the three cardinal sins and the other mitzvot of the Torah only applies during regular times. However, "in a time of religious persecution, when a wicked king issues a decree against the Jewish religion or one of its mitzvot, we are required to give our lives in order not to violate any of the mitzvot." It appears that the situation during the Chanukah era fit the criteria for a "period of religious persecution."

ואף על פי שהחילוק האמור בין שאר המצוות (ש"יעבור ואל יהרג") ושלוש העבירות (ש"יהרג ואל יעבור") אינו אלא שלא בשעת השמד, "אבל" בשעת השמד<sup>10</sup>, והוא שעומד מלך רשע. . ויגזור שמד<sup>11</sup> על ישראל לבטל דתם או מצוה מן המצוות, יהרג ואל יעבור אפילו על אחת משאר מצוות", ובפשטות נראה<sup>12</sup> שדינו של מצב ימי חנוכה הוא כשעת גזירה.

### Source 5 Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, Yesodei Hatorah 5:3

Student's  
pg. 9

All the above distinctions only apply in times other than times of a decree. However, in times of a decree—i.e., when a wicked king, like Nebuchadnezzar or his like, will arise and issue a decree against the Jewish people to nullify their faith or one of the mitzvot—one should sacrifice one's life rather than transgress any of the other mitzvot, whether one is compelled to transgress amidst ten Jews or one is compelled to transgress merely amidst gentiles.

וְכָל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ שְׁלֹא בְשַׁעַת הַגְּזֵרָה אֲבָל בְּשַׁעַת הַגְּזֵרָה וְהוּא שִׁיעֲמַד מֶלֶךְ רָשָׁע כְּנֹבֹכְדִנְצַר וְחִבְרִיו וְיִגְזֹר גְּזֵרָה עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַטֵּל דִּתָּם אוֹ מִצְוָה מִן הַמִּצְוֹת. יִהְיֶה וְאֵל יַעֲבֹר אֶפְלוּ עַל אַחַת מִשְׁאֵר מִצְוֹת בֵּין נְאֻסִים בְּתוֹךְ עֲשָׂרָה בֵּין נְאֻסִים בֵּינוּ לְבֵין עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים.

The order "be killed and don't transgress", as limited to only the three specific offenses, applies only to a Jew as an individual. However, when the Jewish people as a collective are faced with a spiritual threat in which a hostile regime tries to force them to abandon their religion, they are all required to sacrifice their lives over every sin, even the smallest and most insignificant. Obviously, this was the situation under the Greek decrees. Therefore, it is clear that the Maccabees had to sacrifice their lives for it!

10) רמב"ם שם ה"ג (מסנהדרין שם, סע"א).

11) לפנינו ברמב"ם "גזירה" במקום "שמד". אבל בכ"י התימנים ועוד "שמד".

## >> The Rebbe

### Willingness To Die Doesn't Require Active Rebellion

Student's  
pg. 10

But there is still room to question whether the Jewish people were obligated to go to war over this. When the law states "be killed and don't transgress" this means that if a person is being forced to violate a prohibition he is obligated to give his life. But this doesn't seem to mandate launching a war against the evil kingdom in order to abolish the decrees.

הרי עדיין יש מקום לעיון אם בני ישראל היו חייבים לצאת במלחמה על כך, שהרי, כוונת הדברים שבשעת השמד "יהרג ואל יעבור" על כל המצוות, היא, שאם כופים את האדם לעבור על מצוות התורה, חייב הוא למסור את נפשו ולא לעבור; אבל לכאורה אין לומר שיש חיוב לצאת במלחמה נגד המלכות הרשעה לבטל גזירות.

*True, in a time of religious persecution we are obligated to give up our lives for every mitzvah. But this obligation only applies in a scenario where a person is personally and directly being compelled to transgress. In many cases people have a third option, to flee to the desert or hide somewhere, thereby avoiding transgression. Nowhere does it say that people are obligated to launch a rebellion against the strongest army in the world, and begin what would be a suicidal war!*

We therefore require an explanation for why the Jewish people went to war against the Greeks, risking their lives in a way that wasn't at all obligatory.

ולפי זה דרוש ביאור והסבר - מדוע יצאו בני ישראל במלחמה נגד היוונים ומסרו את נפשם באופן שלא היו מחויבים בו כלל!?

*We see that, from the standpoint of pure halachah, the Maccabees seemingly shouldn't have risked their lives against the mighty Greek army. Rather, they should have kept a low profile and tried to ride out the wave until better times would come.*

# C. National Sanctity

Student's  
pg. 11

## >> The Rebbe

### Beyond Reason

We can suggest the following explanation:

During the Chanukah period there was a decree that targeted the purity of Jewish family life. This is a matter on which the sanctity of the Jewish people—at that time and for all subsequent generations—is dependent. Therefore, the Jewish people made no calculations about whether risking their lives was obligatory or not, and embarked on a war beyond any rhyme or reason - in order to protect and guarantee the sanctity of the Jewish people.

*There are times when a Jew's conduct goes beyond the regular halachic rules. There are times when the soul comes to the fore and makes decisions on its own. In such cases, a Jew doesn't enter into a logical analysis of halachic angles to determine how to act, but rather acts instinctively, beyond reason.*

*As we will see, halachah itself recognizes the legitimacy of such conduct.*

### Source 6 Kesef Mishneh on the above Mishneh Torah

Student's  
pg. 11

Maimonides is of the opinion that when the Talmud states that one should transgress and not be killed, it means that one must transgress so as not to be killed. But many other great authorities maintain that if the person allowed themselves to be killed rather than transgress, it is considered a righteous act. It seems that they explain the command “transgress and do not get killed” as mere permission to transgress, but not as a requirement.

ויש לומר הביאור בזה:

מכיון שבימי חנוכה הייתה הגזירה על ענינים הקשורים עם “טהרת המשפחה”, דבר הנוגע לקדושת האומה, ובזה תלויה גם קדושת עם ישראל במשך כל הדורות הבאים לאחרי זה - לכך לא התחשבו בני ישראל כלל אם חייבים הם למסור את נפשם או לאו, אלא יצאו למלחמה במסירות נפש שלמעלה מטעם ודעת, כדי לשמור ולהבטיח את קדושת האומה.

סוֹבֵר רַבִּינוּ שְׁשֹׁאֲמָרוּ בְּגִמְרָא  
יַעֲבוֹר וְאֵל יִהְרֵג פְּרוּשׁ צָרִיךְ  
לְעֵבֵר כְּדֵי שְׂלָא יִהְרֵג. אֲבָל  
שְׁלָמִים וְכֵן רַבִּים סוֹבְרִים דָּאֵם  
נִהְרֵג וְלֹא עֵבֵר צְדָקָה תַּחֲשֵׁב לוֹ.  
וְנִרְאָה שְׁמִפְרָשִׁים יַעֲבוֹר וְאֵל  
יִהְרֵג הַרְשׁוֹת בְּיָדוֹ לְעֵבֵר כְּדֵי  
שְׂלָא יִהְרֵג.

וְכַתֵּב בְּנִמוּקֵי יוֹסֵף, דְּאֶפִּילוּ לְפִי  
סִבְרַת רַבִּינוּ אִם הוּא אָדָם גְּדוֹל  
וְחִסִּיד יֵרָא שְׂמִים וְרוּאָה שְׁהַדוֹר

And it is written in the Nimukei Yosef, that even according to Maimonides's opinion, a great and pious person who fears G-d, and sees that the generation is completely disregarding the proposed transgression, may sanctify G-d's name and sacrifice himself even for a simple mitzvah, so that the people will see and learn to fear G-d and love him with all their hearts.

פְּרוֹץ בְּכֶךְ רִשְׁאֵי לְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת הַשֵּׁם  
וְלִמְסוֹר עֲצָמוֹ אֶפְלוֹ עַל מִצְוָה  
קְלָה כְּדֵי שְׂיִרְאוּ הָעָם וְלִמְדוּ  
לִירְאָה אֶת הַשֵּׁם וּלְאַהֲבוֹ בְּכָל  
לְבָבָם.

A person may “sanctify G-d's name and sacrifice himself even for a minor mitzvah” if the generation is disregarding it. Meaning, there is room for performing an act of self-sacrifice for the purposes of education and influence on society. This may be an extreme case, but its occurrence is certainly possible and valued.

## >> The Rebbe

### The Women Inspired The Men To Rebel

Student's  
pg. 12

This was achieved by the Jewish women of that generation.

וענין זה נפעל על ידי נשי ישראל  
שבדור ההוא:

In addition to the Jewish women themselves resisting the Greeks in non-obligatory self-sacrifice (like the men), the Jewish women were the ones that inspired the men to feel the need for superrational self-sacrifice and to rebel against the Greeks militarily.

נוסף לכך שגם הנשים עצמן לחמו נגד היוונים באופן של מסירות נפש שלא היו מחויבים בה (כמו האנשים), הרי, נשי ישראל הן הן שעוררו ופעלו על האנשים להתעורר ברגש של מסירות נפש שלמעלה מטעם ודעת, ולצאת במלחמה גלויה נגד היוונים<sup>13</sup>.

Since this unique form of self-sacrifice during the Chanukah era—sacrifice beyond any reason—was inspired by the Jewish women, they also merited that the miracle of salvation came about through a woman.

וכיון שהעבודה המיוחדת של מסירות נפש שמצינו בימי חנוכה (מסירות נפש שלמעלה מטעם ודעת) - נתעוררה ובאה על ידי נשי ישראל, לכך זכו שגם נס ההצלה בא על ידן דווקא.

The women didn't only resist the Greeks themselves, they were the catalysts for the rebellion, inspiring the men to fight on behalf of the sanctity of the nation. This is why the salvation ultimately came about through a woman.

13) ראה יוצר ושאלתו שבהערה הקודמת (ס"ע קפו ואילך). וש"נ. אוצר מדרשים ע' 190. ע' 192. ולהעיר מפקקי ריא"ז שבת פ"ב הל' חנוכה אות טז.



## Supernatural Reward For Superrational Sacrifice

Student's  
pg. 12

As the Jewish people acted with self-sacrifice beyond reason, G-d rewarded them measure for measure, beyond nature.

There were two supernatural elements in the story: (a) the military victory over the Greeks was supernatural, and (b) the finding of the jug of pure oil and the subsequent miracle that the oil lasted for eight days.

*Until now we learned that mitzvot are compatible with life, and when there are certain extenuating circumstances preventing people from observing a mitzvah, they are halachically exempt. On this level, reason plays a central role. The halachic and rational analysis of the situation guides us how to conduct ourselves in it.*

*During the rebellion against the Greeks, logic and reason didn't play a role. The force motivating the women—and the men that followed in their wake—to rebel against the Greeks, was super-rational self-sacrifice, beyond any reason.*

*In response, the reward was correspondingly supernatural. The victory of a band of poorly armed Maccabees against the mighty Greek empire was completely supernatural. In addition, the miracle of finding a small jug of pure oil that lasted for eight days in the Menorah of the Holy Temple was similarly supernatural.*

### Why Was Pure Oil Needed?

Student's  
pg. 11

There is a question that needs to be addressed regarding the oil. The law is that "impurity is allowed for the public," meaning that when the public as a whole is impure, their state of impurity can be ignored and they may go about the regular Temple service. If so, the Jewish people should have been allowed to kindle the Menorah using impure oil and shouldn't have needed the miracle of finding the one pure jug.

ויש לומר, שמכיון שהקב"ה משלם לישראל "מדה כנגד מדה"<sup>14</sup> - לכן, כשם שעבודתם של ישראל בזמן ההוא הייתה באופן של מסירות נפש שלמעלה מטעם ודעת, גם השכר שניתן להם מאת הקב"ה (בשביל עבודתם) היה למעלה מטעם ודעת.

ושני פרטים בזה: (א) ניצחון המלחמה נגד היוונים - שהיה ניצחון שלמעלה מן הטבע. (ב) נס מציאת פך השמן הטהור, ועוד ועיקר הנס שלאחרי זה - שאף ש"לא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד, נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים"<sup>15</sup>.

ויובן זה בהקדם<sup>16</sup>: לכאורה מדוע הוצרכו ישראל לנס מציאת פך שמן טהור, ושהשמן ידלק במשך שמונה ימים - הרי "טומאה הותרה (או דחוייה) בצבור"<sup>17</sup>, ואם כן היה מותר להם להדליק את המנורה גם בשמן טמא?

<sup>14</sup> ע' 488 ואילך. מכתב כ"ו וכ"ח כסלו שנה זו (אג"ק ח"ה ס"ע צו ואילך. ע' קו ואילך).  
<sup>15</sup> פסחים עז, א. פ. סע"א. וש"נ.

<sup>14</sup> שבת קה, ב. סנהדרין צ, סע"א. וראה סוטה ח, ב ואילך.  
<sup>15</sup> שבת כא, ב ובמאירי שם. וראה ד"ה ואתה ברחמיך הרבים כו' תשמ"ו ס"ב (ת"מ סה"מ כסלו ע' קפז) ואילך.  
<sup>16</sup> בהבא לקמן - ראה פני יהושע לשת שם. ועוד. וראה גם לקו"ש ח"כ

## Source 7 Penei Yehoshua, Shabbat 21b

**Student's** pg. 13 What is Hanukkah? The Sages taught . . . the Greeks defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary . . . the Jews searched and found only one jug of oil . . . a miracle occurred etc.

Seemingly, one must wonder, why was the trouble of the miracle necessary? It is an established law that impurity is allowed for the public, and they could have kindled the menorah with impure oil.

מאי חֲנֻכָּה דִּתְנוּ רַבָּנָן כּו' טְמֵאוּ  
כָּל הַשְּׂמֵנִים שְׁבִהִיכָל כּו' וְלֹא  
מְצָאוּ אֶלָּא פֶּךָ אֶחָד [כו'] וְנִעְשָׂה  
בּוֹ נֵס.

וְלִכְאוּרָה יֵשׁ לְתַמָּה כָּל טַרַח הַנֵּס  
זֶה לְמָה דְּהָא קְיָמָא לֹא טְמֵאָה  
הַתְּרָה בְּצַבוּר וְהָיוּ יְכוּלִין לְהַדְלִיק  
בְּשֶׁמֶן טְמֵא.

*When examining the situation according to halachic standards, it is not clear why such an amazing miracle was really necessary. The halacha expressly permits the use of impure oil, of which there was plenty. "Impurity was allowed for the public" - this is what the halacha states very clearly. Granted, it is not at all pleasant to light with impure oil which was defiled by the Greeks, but definitely not the end of the world.*

### >> The Rebbe

**Student's** pg. 13 The explanation is that G-d rewarded the Jewish people measure for measure. since they had self-sacrifice beyond the letter of the law, G-d rewarded them with the miracle of finding a jug of pure oil that miraculously lasted for eight days. This was also beyond the letter of the law, as strictly speaking it would have been permissible to use impure oil under the circumstances.

והביאור בזה - שהקב"ה שילם לבני ישראל "מדה כנגד מדה", ומכיון שהם מסרו נפשם באופן של לפנים ולמעלה משורת הדין, שילם להם הקב"ה בנס מציאת הפך של שמן טהור והדלקתו במשך שמונה ימים, שגם הוא למעלה משורת הדין (כיון שעל פי דין היו מותרים, כאמור, להדליק בשמן טמא)<sup>18</sup>.

*When people go beyond their obligations and make the effort to do something they aren't obligated in, G-d derives pleasure from this and rewards them in kind.*

### No Compromise On National Security

**Student's** pg. 14 There is a lesson here for every Jew:

In matters pertaining to the sanctity of the Jewish people we shouldn't only do what we are allowed and obligated to do by the letter of the law. We must exert ourselves and act with superrational self-

ומזה לימוד והוראה לכל אחד ואחת מישראל:

בדבר הנוגע לקדושת האומה אין לעשות אך ורק מה שמותר (וצריך) משורת הדין, אלא צריכים להתחזק ולהתאמץ ללכת במסירת

sacrifice, beyond the letter of the law. G-d will reward us measure for measure, and bless us with great abundance in our material and spiritual affairs, even when a more measured blessing would have sufficed.

נפש למעלה מטעם ודעת, לפנים משורת  
הדין, והקב"ה משלם מדה כנגד מדה, שאף  
בענינים שיכולים להסתפק במדה מסוימת,  
נותן הקב"ה בשפע רב - בגשמיות ועל דרך  
זה ברוחניות.

משיחת ליל נר חמישי דחנוכה, בעת הקבלת פנים, ה'תשי"ב  
הנחה בלתי מוגה  
תורת מנחם חלק ד' עמ' רלב

*Thank G-d, we no longer have to deal with oppressive regimes that prevent us from observing mitzvot. We enjoy unprecedented religious freedom, and Jewish communities are flourishing around the world, living in peace and respect from our non-Jewish neighbors. Expressions of antisemitism are roundly condemned by governments and prominent civil organizations.*

*But the concept of self-sacrifice still finds expression in our lives. When we make the extra effort to do a good deed even when we aren't obligated, even when we have valid justifications for inaction, G-d rewards us in kind, measure for measure.*