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Sincerely,

Rabbi Yehoshua Werde
Director

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ב"ה



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Chanukah

Why do we celebrate Chanukah? What events led to the establishment of Chanukah? What was the miracle? How do we commemorate the miracle? How do our commemorations express what Chanukah is uniquely about?

The (Hi)Story of Chanukah

Greece originally consisted of powerful warring city-states such as Athens and Sparta who for many centuries remained confined to their own borders largely because of internal battles with neighboring city-states.

The city-states of Greece had a highly advanced culture for their times. It was home to the great philosophers Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, and great mathematicians like Pythagoras, Euclid, and Archimedes.

Then, after years of Greek culture remaining contained within the geographic borders of the city-states, Alexander the Great and his armies went out and conquered many countries. Most, if not all, of the civilized world of the time came under his rule. He built an empire as far reaching as India to the east and Egypt to the south.

When Alexander the Great died, his empire was divided between his four generals who warred between each other for power and succession.

This division established different Greek kingdoms within the civilized world, including the Ptolemies in Egypt, and the Seleucids in Syria.

In the time of prosperity that followed Alexander the Great, the lands that were under Greek influence progressed in the

areas of the arts, exploration, literature, theatre, architecture, music, mathematics, philosophy, and science, developing a highly cultured society—a culture called Hellenism.

Even the Torah recognizes the beauty of the Greek language and culture. As the Gemarah teaches:

Talmud, Megilah 9b

רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר אף בספרים לא התירו שיכתבו אלא יוונית....מאי טעמא דרבן שמעון בן גמליאל אמר קרא יפת אלקים ליפת וישכן באהלי שם...יפיותו של יפת יהיו באהלי שם.

Rav Shimon ben Gamliel said, "The only language [besides Hebrew] that one can write Tanach in is Greek."

What is the basis for the ruling of Rav Shimon ben Gamliel? The posuk states, "[Yaft] May Hashem expand Yefes and he will dwell in the tents of Shem" (Bereishis 9:27). This means the beauty of Yefes will be in the tents of Shem [Yefes is the father of Yavan - the founder of Greece]

As the culture of Hellenism grew in popularity, there were many Jews who adopted its philosophy and practice. Hellenism celebrated the human body and its pleasures to the point of gross indulgence. The Olympic Games were invented for athletes to show off their might and prowess. Hellenism worshipped the human being and the intellect while it scorned faith, ritual, superstition, and all matters pertaining to the spiritual.

This is typical of the Greek approach, as the Ramban writes

about the great mathematician and philosopher, Aristotle:

Ramban, Vayikra 16:8

המתחכמים בטבע הנמשכים אחרי היוני אשר הכחיש כל דבר זולתי המורגש לו, והגים דעתו לחשוב הוא ותלמידיו הרשעים, כי כל ענין שלא השיג אליו הוא בסברתו איננו אמת.

Scientists go in the way of the Greek [i.e. Aristotle] who denied the reality of anything that he could not experience with his senses. He and his wicked students were arrogant enough to believe that anything which they did not understand could not possibly be true.

It was not long before the Seleucid (Syrian-Greek) emperors issued a series of harsh decrees against the Jews and against certain Jewish practices that they felt were a threat to the spread of the Hellenist culture.

Rambam Hilchos Chanukah 3:1

בבית שני כשמלכו יון גזרו גזרות על ישראל ובטלו דתם ולא הניחו אותם לעסוק בתורה ובמצות ופשטו ידם בממונם ובכנותיהם ונכנסו להיכל ופרצו בו פרצות וטמאו הטהרות וצר להם לישראל מאד מפניהם ולחצום לחץ גדול עד שריחם עליהם אלקי אבותינו והושיעם מידם והצילם.

During the times of the Second Beis Hamikdash, when the Greeks ruled over the Jewish people, they instituted decrees against them and attempted to destroy their religion. They did not allow the Jews to study Torah or perform mitzvos. They took their

money and their daughters, and they entered and defiled the Beis Hamikdash, where they violated its purity. The Greeks subjected the Yidden to great hardships and pressured them immensely, until the G-d of our fathers had pity on them and saved them.

Decrees Against Faith-Based Ritual

They insisted that every bride present herself before the regional governor the night before her wedding to be defiled by him. They decreed against the observance of Shabbos, the Jewish calendar, and Bris Milah, all at the penalty of death.

Otzar HaMidrashim, Chanukah, p. 189

עֲתָה בָּאוּ וְנִעְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם וְנִבְטַל מֵהֶם אֶת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת לָהֶם אֱלֹקֵיהֶם
שֶׁבֶת רֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ וּמִילָה.

At that time the Greeks arose over the Jewish people and nullified the covenant which the Jews made with their Hashem: Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh [the Jewish calendar system] and Bris Milah.

Their primary concern was the Jews' faith in an invisible G-d and the various rituals associated with that faith—particularly ones that didn't make sense to them. For example, because the Greeks worshipped the human body, they saw Bris Milah as a mutilation of the body.

The Midrash tells us that they even made the Jews pledge their lack of faith in Hashem:

אומרת להם כתבו לכם על קרן השור שאין לכם חלק באלקי ישראל.

[The Greeks] told [the Jewish people], "Write for yourselves on the horn of an ox that you have no share in the G-d of Israel."

No Problem with Logic, Only with G-dly Logic

The Greeks problem was not with Torah and mitzvos per se, as much as with the fact that it is Hashem's Torah and Hashem's mitzvos. As we see in the Ve'al Hanisim addition to the Bentching and Shmoneh Esrei for Chanukah:

Ve'al Hanisim (Liturgic insert for Chanukah)

בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול חשמונאי ובניו. פשעמדה מלכות יון
הרשעה על עמך ישראל להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחקי רצונך:

In the days of Matisyahu the son of the Kohel Gadol, the Chashmona'i, and his sons; when the evil Greek Kingdom rose up against Your Nation, the Jewish people, to make them forget Your Torah and to turn them away from the mitzvos of Your Will.

Maamar Tanu Rabanan Mitzvas Ner Chanukah 5738

זהו להשכיחם תורתך (תורתך דוקא), שגם להיונים לא הי' איכפת (כ"כ) שישראל ילמדו תורה, אלא שרצו שלימוד התורה יהי' רק מצד השכל שבתורה, כי היא חכמתכם ובינתכם לעיני העמים, וכל עיקר מלחמתם היתה שביקשו להשכיחם תורתך, להשכיח ח"ו את ישראל שהתורה היא תורת הוי'. ועד"ו במצוות, שמלחמת היונים היתה נגד האלקות שבמצוות, מה שהמצוות הם רצונו ית' דזהו להעבירם מחוקי

רצונך (חוקי דוקא ורצונך דוקא)

This is the meaning of “to make them forget Your Torah” (specifically that the Torah is “Yours”). It didn’t bother the Greeks much that the Jews studied Torah. They only wanted their Torah study to be because of the intellectual aspects of Torah, “because it is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations.” The main purpose of their war was to make them forget “Your Torah,” to cause the Jews to forget that the Torah is Hashem’s Torah. Similarly, with regards to mitzvos, the Greeks battled against the Divine aspect of the mitzvos—the fact that the mitzvos are the will of Hashem. This is the meaning of “to drive them away from the ‘chukim’ of ‘Your will’” (specifically “chukim” [mitzvos that are not understood] and specifically of “Your will”).

Greek Interest in Torah

Not only were the Hellenistic Greeks not opposed to Torah study itself; on the contrary, the Egyptian [Ptolemaic] Greeks forced 72 Sages to translate the Torah into Greek so it would adorn their library and they could access its teachings (albeit as part of a secular pursuit of knowledge):

Talmud, Megillah 9a

מעשה בתלמי המלך שכינס שבעים ושנים זקנים, והכניסן בשבעים ושנים בתים, ולא גילה להם על מה כינסן. ונכנס אצל כל אחד ואחד ואמר להם: כתבו לי תורת משה רבכם.

King Ptolemy once gathered seventy-two Elders. He placed them in seventy-two chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said, "Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher."

The Gemarah continues to relate how each of them decided to make certain changes in the translation in order not to offend King Ptolemy and in order not to mislead him to arrive at incorrect conclusions about the Torah's meaning. Miraculously, each of Sages made exactly the same changes.

Why did the Greeks want to study Torah?

Maharal, Sefer Ner Mitzvah

כל ענין המלכות זה שהיו מבקשים החכמה... ולפיכך האומה הזאת בקשו שיכתבו להם חכמים התורה יוגית, כמו שמפורש במגילה (ט), א)... וזה מורה שהחכמה שייך להם ביותר מן שאר האומות.

The central feature of the Greek nation was their desire for wisdom ... That is why they requested the Sages to translate the Torah for them, as is explicitly stated in Megillah (9a)... And this serves as a testament to the fact that they were more inclined to wisdom than any other nation.

Obviously, Ptolemy and the rest of the Greeks did not care for Hashem and the spiritual aspect of Torah, only for the secular wisdom they thought they could gain from it. The Hellenist war against the Judaism was to eradicate the service of Hashem from Torah study, not the Torah study in and of

itself.

The Revolt

Once Antiochus Epiphanes' soldiers took control of the Beis Hamikdash and defiled it with pagan worship (avadah zarah), it crossed a line that could not be tolerated. And when a group of Syrian-Greek soldiers came to Modiin to uphold the king's decree, a small band of Jews led by Mattisyahu the Kohen Gadol began to revolt.

The group formed into a small militia, united under the banner of "Mi kamochoh Ba'eilim Hashem" the acronym of which formed the word Maccabe, and with Hashem's aid, managed to miraculously overwhelm the great Syrian-Greek army in battle after battle.

Antiochus sent one general after another to crush the Jewish revolt, but the Jews kept ambushing them and coming out victorious despite the fact that they were outnumbered many times over and by soldiers with superior training and weaponry.

Battle after battle raged on until they were able to regain control of the Beis Hamikdash and rededicate it, and Chanukah celebrates the rededication of Beis Hamikdash (Chanukah means dedication).

It should be noted, that following the episode of Chanukah, the Macabbean army lost several wars in which several Chashmonaim (as Mattisyahu's family were called) were killed. Those wars (following the story of Chanukah) were not about defending Judaism as a religion from Hellenist influence, but rather to secure Macabbean political control of Eretz Yisroel. It appears to be a trend in history that whenever

there is a battle to defend Yiddishkeit, Hashem comes to our aid and the Jewish forces miraculously manage to defeat our enemies. This has not always been the case with regards to wars intended to conquer or defend our control of the land.

When the Chashmoanim entered the Beis Hamikdash to rededicate it, they came upon a very sad sight. The Greeks had transformed it into a temple for worshipping a Greek god. The Chashmonaim wasted no time in repairing the Beis Hamikdash and reinstating its service.

The problem was that they couldn't find oil suitable for lighting the menorah (it had all been touched by the Greeks). Miraculously, they managed to find one small jar of oil that was enough to light the menorah for one day. Even more miraculously, the oil lasted an entire eight days until they were able to procure new oil that could be used to light the menorah.

This, says the Gemarah, is why we celebrate Chanukah:

Talmud, Shabbat 21b

מאי חנוכה... שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאו ימים טובים בהלל והודאה.

What is Chanukah? ... When the Greeks entered the Holy Sanctuary they defiled all the oil that was there. And when the dynasty of the Hasmoneans grew strong and defeated the Greeks, they searched and found only one flask of oil with the stamp of the

Kohen Gadol (High Priest) that had been set aside; and there was only enough oil to burn for one day. A miracle occurred and they lit [the Menorah] from this oil for eight days. The following year the Sages established these days for praise and thanksgiving.

Why Did They Need The Oil To Last Eight Days?

Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 670

הטעם שהוצרכו להדליק שמנה ימים מאותו פך מפני שכל ישראל היו בחזקת טמאי מתים ואי אפשר להתקין שמן טהור עד שיעברו עליהם שבעה ימים מיום טומאתם ויום אחד לכתישת הזיתים ותיקונם להוציא מהם שמן טהור

והר"ן (שם) כתב שהיה להם שמן טהור רחוק ארבעה ימים והוצרכו שמנה ימים בין הליכה וחזרה:

The reason they needed to light the Menorah for eight days from that very container of oil was because all of the Jews were ritually impure [tmei mais from the war] and it was impossible to prepare new pure oil until a seven day waiting period had passed, in addition to the one day required for the pressing of the olives and the procedure to prepare pure oil.

The Ran writes [the eight-day period was necessary for a different reason]: The pure oil was available at a distance of four days' travel, and eight days were necessary for the round trip.

The Miracles of Chanukah

Going back to the gemarah's description of the events of Chanukah, there were several miracles that contributed to the Chanukah story.

1) There was the miracle of the few Maccabees defeating the large and mighty Greek armies.

2) There was the miracle of finding the small flask of oil with the stamp of the Kohen Gadol intact.

3) And then there was the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days when there was only enough to last for one day.

These three miracles differ from each other in the degree at which they defy the rules of nature.

1) The miracle of the few overcoming the many in battle is a statistic improbability, but not an impossibility. There was no point during the war that you can point at any detail and say that there was an open miracle.

2) Hashem making available the small flask of oil There oil didn't exist, yet miraculously a flask of oil appeared. While this was a miracle that defied the rules of nature (the flask of oil miraculously coming into existence), the miracle was manifest in such a manner that no spectator was able to witness nature being defied. At first they couldn't find oil, and then they found some. This was a miracle that defied nature, but was still enfolded within nature.

Then there was the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days. This was in defiance of the rules of nature even for the spectator. The Beis Yosef cites several ways in which this miracle may have taken place:

Why Celebrate 8 Days, If The Miracle Lasted 7?

Hundreds of answers have been proposed to this question in Jewish writings. Here are the most famous answers from the Beis Yosef:

Beis Yosef, Ibid

ואיכא למידק למה קבעו שמנה ימים דכיון דשמן שבפך היה בו כדי להדליק לילה אחת ונמצא שלא נעשה הנס אלא בשבעה לילות.

וי"ל שחילקו שמן שבפך לשמנה חלקים ובכל לילה היו נותנים במנורה חלק אחד והיה דולק עד הבוקר ונמצא שבכל הלילות נעשה נס...

ועוד י"ל שלאחר שנתנו שמן בנרות המנורה כשיעור נשאר הפך מלא כבתחלה וניכר הנס אף בלילה הראשונה.

אי נמי שבליל ראשון נתנו כל השמן בנרות ודלקו כל הלילה ובבוקר מצאו הנרות מלאים שמן וכן בכל לילה וליילה:

We need to understand why Chanukah was established for eight days, as there was already sufficient oil in the flask for one night, surely the miracle only lasted for seven nights!?

One explanation is that they divided the oil in the flask into eight portions and each night they put one portion into the menorah and it remained lit until the morning, so we find that a miracle took place on each night ...

Another explanation is that after they poured the required amount of oil [from the flask] into the lamps of the menorah, the flask remained as full

of oil as it had been originally and the miracle was obvious even on the first night.

Another explanation is that on the first night they poured all the oil into the lamps and it stayed lit all night. In the morning they found the lamps full of oil, and this reoccurred on each of the [eight] nights.

Which is the Primary Miracle of Chanukah?

As mentioned before, there were several miracles for which we commemorate Chanukah, which of them is considered the main one?

Maharal, Ner Mitzvah, p. 22

...עיקר מה שקבעו ימי חנוכה בשביל שהיו מנצחים את היונים רק שלא היה נראה שהיה כאן נצחון הזה על ידי נס ... לפיכך נעשה הנס על ידי נרות המנורה שידעו שהכל היה בנס מן השם יתברך.

The essence of the establishment of the festival of Chanukah was the military defeat of the Greeks, except that it was not apparent to them that this victory was a miracle ... Therefore, the miracle of the lights of the Menorah was performed for them so that they would know that everything was a miracle from Hashem.

Ramban, Shmos 13:16

ומן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים אדם מודה בנסים הנסתרים.

From the great and obvious miracles one comes to

appreciate the hidden miracles.

One of the important messages of the Chanukah miracle is to remind us of the small miracles that exist in our own personal life. Creation itself is a miraculous phenomenon, however, due to the ever-recurring illusion of nature, we often fail to realize the hand of Hashem working through nature (or that nature itself is a miracle). We should always be on the lookout to notice the hashgocha protis (the Divine providence) and the small miracles that exist within everything that happens to us and recognize the hand of Hashem that is constantly guiding the direction of our lives.

How Miracles Are Made

Chassidus explains that not only was the miracle with the oil in order to demonstrate the miracle of winning the war in a manner that all will realize that it was a true miracle, but the miracle of the oil itself was a product of the mesirus nefesh of Mattisyahu and his sons:

Maamar Lehavin Inyan Neiros Chanukah 5726

אור זה (שלמעלה מהשתלשלות, שמאיר בימי חנוכה ובפרט בנרות חנוכה) נמשך ע"י המס"נ דמתתיהו ובניו...שמצד גודל החושך שהי' אז נתעורר אצלם כח המס"נ שלמעלה מהשתלשלות שבאדם, ועי"ז המשיכו מעצמות אוא"ם שלמעלה מהשתלשלות

This light (that transcends hishtalshelus, that shines during the days of Chanukah, specifically through the Chanukah lamps) was introduced through the mesirus nefesh of Mattisyahu and his sons... The great darkness that existed then evoked within

them the power of self-sacrifice that transcends the hishtalshelus (natural order) of the person, and thus they were able to draw from the Atzmus of Hashem's infinite light that transcends hishtalshelus.

When a person serves Hashem by defying his own nature, Hashem responds in kind by relating to the person in a miraculous manner.

The Mitzvos of Chanukah

To celebrate Chanukah, the Sages established two mitzvos.

1) To light the Menorah and 2) to praise Hashem for the miracles by refraining from fasting and eulogy and reciting hallel and ve'al hanisim.

The Menorah

The primary function of lighting the menorah is not only to commemorate the miracle, but to publicize it. This is why it is placed near a doorway.

Where Should the Menorah be Placed?

Talmud, Shabbos 21b

...נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו מבחוץ...

The mitzvah of the Chanukah light is to place it on the outside at the entrance of one's home ...

Rashi, ibid

משום פרסומי ניסא.

This is in order to publicize the miracle

Nowadays, (outside of Yerushalayim,) we no longer place the menorah near the main doorway of the house. This came about because of religious persecution and the harsh outdoor weather conditions in some regions. The Chabad custom is to place it in a doorway inside the house so it can be placed on the left side of the doorway opposite the mezuzah (unlike many customs to place it in a window).

Pirsumei nisah—to publicize the miracle, also dictates the other halachos about the menorah, e.g., that it shouldn't be too high (higher than 20 amos) that it shouldn't be too low (not lower than 3 handbreadths, and ideally not higher than 10), and that it should be lit at a time when people are around to see it.

When Should the Menorah be Lit?

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 672:1-2

אין מדליקין נר חנוכה קודם שתשקע החמה. שכח או הזיד ולא הדליק עם שקיעת החמה מדליק והולך עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק שהוא כמו חצי שעה שאז העם עוברים ושבים ואיכא פרסומי ניסא... אבל אם עבר זה הזמן ולא הדליק מדליק והולך כל הלילה...

One lights the Chanukah lamp from sunset onward. If one did not light at sunset, one should light as long as people are returning from the marketplace, which is approximately one-half hour [after sunset] since this is the optimal time to publicize the miracle ... If this time period has passed and one has not lit the lamps, one may light the entire night.

How Many Lights?

Talmud, Shabbos 21b

תנו רבנן מצות חנוכה נר איש וביתו והמהדרין נר לכל אחד ואחד והמהדרין מן המהדרין בית שמאי אומרים יום ראשון מדליק שמנה מכאן ואילך פוחת והולך ובית הלל אומרים יום ראשון מדליק אחת מכאן ואילך מוסיף והולך.

The Rabbis taught: The mitzvah of [lighting the] Chanukah [menorah] is [one] candle for a person and his home. Beautification of this mitzvah (mehadrin) is [to light] one candle for each member of the household. Beis Shammai said that the most beautiful way to perform the mitzvah (mehadrin min hamehadrin) is to light eight candles on the first day of Chanukah and decrease [on each successive night]; and Beis Hillel said to light one candle on the first night and increase [on each successive night].

There are three ways the Sages provided for the mitzvah to be done.

- 1) The primary mitzvah: The simplest way to fulfil the mitzvah is for every household to light one candle each night.
- 2) Mehadrin: The more beautified way of fulfilling the mitzvah is for every person in every household to light one candle on each night.
- 3) Mehadrin min hamehadrin: The most beautiful way to fulfil the mitzvah (according to Beis Hillel) is to light one candle on the first night, two and the second, adding one additional candle each night.

In Shulchan Aruch it is clear that everyone is accustomed to performing the mitzvah in the most beautified manner (mehadrin min hamehadrin).

In fact, you cannot buy a Chanukah menorah from a judaica store today that is “plain kosher,” or even “mehadrin”—they only sell “mehadrin min hamehadrin!”

Why Mehadrin Isn't Good Enough

There are two aspects to this that are out of the ordinary :

1) Ordinarily there is a simple way to perform a mitzvah and then there are ways you can increase in beautifying the mitzvah, but never more than that. With regard to the Chanukah menorah, however, there is an unusual additional step of beautification, of “mehadrin min hamehadrin!”

2) When it comes to other mitzvahs, most people follow the simplest kosher way to fulfil the mitzvah, whereas only unique individuals take upon themselves additional measures to beautify the mitzvah. With regard to the Chanukah menorah, however, all Jews perform the mitzvah in the way of “mehadrin min hamehadrin.”

The Rebbe explains why the Chanukah Menorah is unique in this regard:

The Rebbe, Toras Menachem vol. 29 pg. 288

הנס הי' להראות חיבתם של ישראל. כלומר: אף שהיו יוצאים ידי חובת המצוה גם בהדלקת שמן טמא, מ"מ, כדי להראות חיבתם של ישראל, עשה הקב"ה נס ושידד מערכות הטבע, כדי שיוכלו ישראל לקיים את המצוה בהידור.

The purpose of the miracle was to demonstrate the

love for Yidden. I.e., although the Chashmonaim could have fulfilled their mitzvah by lighting the menorah with impure oil, nevertheless, in order to show how much He cherishes the Yidden, Hashem performed a miracle and shattered the rules of nature for Jews to be able to fulfil the mitzvah in a beautified manner.

This is what makes the mitzvah of lighting the menorah unique in that it commemorates a miracle that was created to allow Yidden to beautify the mitzvah, therefore everyone does it the mehadrin way, and not just mehadrin, but mehadrin min hamehadrin.

The Chanukiah vs. The Menorah

While the Chanukah menorah was established to commemorate the miracle that happened with the menorah in the Beis Hamikdash, there are several stark differences between the two:

Maamar Lehavin Inyan Neiros Chanukah 5726

הגם שנרות חנוכה תקנום מפני הנס שהי' בנרות המקדש, וכל דתקון רבנן בעין דאורייתא תקון, מ"מ ה"ה חלוקים בכמה ענינים. במספרם - דבהמנורה שבמקדש היו ז' נרות, ונרות חנוכה הם שמונה. במקום עמידתם - דהמנורה היתה בפנים (בתוך הקודש) ובדרום (ימין), ונרות חנוכה מצוה להניחם מבחוץ ובשמאל. ובזמן הדלקתם - דנרות המקדש הדליקו מפלג המנחה, משך זמן (שעה ורביע) קודם שתשקע החמה, ונר חנוכה מצותה היא משתשקע החמה. ומוסיף כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר (בהמשך פדה בשלום ה'תש"ד) עוד דיוק בזה שגר חנוכה מצוה להניחה מבחוץ, דלא מציינו מצוה (מלבד פרה אדומה) שצריכה

להיות בחוץ (רשות הרבים) דוקא.

Although the Sages established the light of Chanukah (the Chanukah Menorah) to commemorate the lamps in the Beis Hamikdash, and everything the Sages establish they do so in a manner consistent with its biblical equivalent, nevertheless, they differ [from the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash] in several details:

In their number: The menorah in the Beis Hamikdash had seven lamps, and Chanukah has eight.

In their location: The menorah was situated inside (the holies) and on the southern (right) side, whereas on Chanukah they are placed outside and on the left.

In the time of their kindling: The lamps of the Beis Hamikdash were lit from the time of Minchah, a period of of (an hour and a quarter) before sunset, whereas the mitzvah on Chanukah is after sunset.

And the Friediker Rebbe adds an additional point: That the mitzvah is to place the Chanukah lamps outside, a phenomenon we do not find elsewhere (besides for the Parah Adumah) that the mitzvah must be performed specifically outside (in the public domain).

Why are there these differences?

To Light Up the Darkness

What makes Chanukah different with regards to all of the aforementioned details is that it is designed to not just to light up the world—as was the function of the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash—but it is intended to light up the darkness specifically.

Maamar Lehavin Inyan Neiros Chanukah, ibid

זמן הדלקתם הוא משתשקע החמה, כי ענינם של נרות חנוכה הוא להאיר את החושך. ומקום עמידתם הוא בחוץ (רשות הרבים) ובשמאל, בכדי להאיר גם את החושך דרשות הרבים, טורי דפרודא, שיניקתם הוא מקו השמאל. וזהו שנרות חנוכה הם שמונה נרות, כי זה שנרות חנוכה מאירים את החושך (גם החושך דרה"ר) הוא מפני שהאור דנרות חנוכה הוא אור שלמעלה מהשתלשלות, ולכן הם שמונה נרות, דמספר שמונה מורה על בחינה שלמעלה מהשתלשלות

The time for when they are supposed to be lit is after sunset, because the purpose of the Chanukah lamps is to light up the darkness. They are situated outside (in the public domain) and on the left in order to light up even the darkness of the public domain, the mountains of separateness, that derive their power from the left side (i.e., the side of unholiness). This is why there are eight Chanukah lamps, because the reason why the lights of Chanukah are able to light up the darkness (even the darkness of the public domain) is because the light of the Chanukah lamps is a light that

emanates from above seder hishtalshelus (higher than the source of the world), they are therefore eight lamps, because the number eight represents a level that is higher than hishtalshelus.

If you need to shine a light to light up an area, the further the distance is from the light source, the stronger the light must be to reach that place. To light up the darkness of the world—the places where the Divine light does not shine naturally due to a powerful darkness—a light that is more powerful than nature is required. This is why the Chanukah lights emanate from a “light-source” that transcends the natural order.

Praise and Gratitude

Equally as important as lighting the menorah, is the mitzvah to show our thanks to Hashem for the miracles He performed and for saving our ancestors.

Rashi, Shabbos 24a

כולה מילתא דחנוכה עיקרה להודאה נתקנה.

Chanukah was established entirely for the sake of gratitude.

For this reason, the Sages instituted a prohibition against fasting or eulogising during the eight days of Chanukah, and required us to recite Hallel and Ve'al Hanisim in the Shmoneh Esrei (in modim—the brocho which is dedicated for expressing our gratitude) and in Bentching (where we thank Hashem for our food and for other wonderful things He has done for us).

Some minority opinions maintain that there is a requirement

to celebrate by eating a meal, however this is not accepted as the rule.

The reason why a festive meal isn't required on Chanukah as it is on Purim, is because on Purim there was a physical salvation—there was a decree to kill the Jews physically, therefore the celebration is more of a physical one with food and drink. Whereas, the decrees relating to Chanukah were spiritual in nature (against Torah and mitzvos), therefore we commemorate in more of a spiritual manner, by lighting candles and adding praises to Hashem in davening.

The Message of Chanukah

Mishlei, 6:23

כִּי יָרַ מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אֹר

For a mitzvah is a lamp, and Torah is light

There is much darkness in our world (darkness as in the concealment of Hashem's presence). This darkness is represented by the culture of society that doesn't allow us to notice and value the hashgocha protis that surrounds us and the Divine power, light, and joy in performing a mitzvah, in studying Torah, and in serving Hashem.

There are forces that seek to extinguish the light of mitzvah. But like oil, we must rise above and stand apart from the society in which we live, while engaging it and saturating it with the light of Torah and mitzvos, giving it our all to the extent of mesirus nefesh.

To this end, the Rebbe encouraged us to go out and see to it that every Jew lights a Chanukah menorah, spreading this

message to every Jew, by kindling his soul with the light of a mitzvah.

Take-Aways

- » The Greeks had no problem with Torah study as an academic pursuit, they even translated it into Greek to study it (at least the Egyptian ones did). However, they worshipped reason and human ability and took issue with the holy and irrational aspects of Torah and Mitzvos.
- » Chanukah commemorates three miracles, the victory of the few and weak over the many and mighty, the finding of a single flask of untouched oil to light the menorah, and the fact that oil that could last for one day lasted for eight. The primary commemoration is the victory at war, while the open miracle of the oil expressed that there was a more profound degree of miracle inherent within the victory.
- » The big miracles are there for us to pay attention to all the small miracles in our lives.
- » The Chanukah menorah differs from the menorah in the Beis Hamikdash in its placement (inside/outside, right/left) and time of lighting (day/night) because the purpose of the Chanukah menorah is to light up the darkness, it therefore expresses an even more potent light (that could reach the darkness).
- » The mesirus nefesh of the Chashmonaim, rising above their nature, is what brought about the miracle.
- » They could have used the impure oil to light the menorah, Hashem performed a miracle to allow them to beautify the mitzvah, therefore there's an additional layer of beautification added to the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah menorah (unlike any other mitzvah), and everyone does it mehadrin min hamehadrin.