



פרשת מקץ

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HAKHEL AND CHANUKAH

The Mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles is similar to the Mitzvah of Hakhel in that it is a Mitzvah for men, women and children. Even though both Hakhel and Chanukah candles are time-bound positive Mitzvah, women are obligated in their observance.

The Assyrian-Greeks sought to weaken the faith of the Jewish people and their observance of Torah and Mitzvos. The victory and miracle of Chanukah brought about a resurgence of faith and observance. This is similar to the objective of the Mitzvah of Hakhel: "That they learn... and fear Hashem... and observe all of the... Torah"

The miracle of Chanukah took place in the Beis Hamikdash where the Mitzvah of Hakhel was observed.

Hakhel took place on Sukkos, which is connected to Chanukah in a number of ways; They are both 8-day festivals. We recite the full Hallel for the entirety of both festivals.

According to Beis Shammai, the Chanukah candles should be lit in descending order; 8 on the first night, 7 on the second night etc. One of the reasons the Talmud brings is because the Chanukah candles are like the Bulls of the Musaf offerings of Sukkos which decreased in number each day.

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The Hidden Power to Defeat Yavan

The Gemara's account of the miracle of Chanukah emphasises the connection to the Heichal, the structure of the Beis Hamikdash; "The Yevanim (Greeks) entered the Heichal and defiled all of the oils within the Heichal".

Their war against the Jews was a spiritual one. They sought "to cause them to forget your Torah and to take them away from the statutes of Your will". Yavan represents spiritual darkness.

The Mahara"l of Prague explains that the spiritual force of the Yevanim was able to affect the level of the 'Heichal'. This is alluded to in Gematria; ה"יכל has the Gematria of 65. יון (Yavan) has the Gematria of 66. The greater Gematria alludes to their ability to dominate and defile the Heichal and all of the oil of the Heichal.

The Heichal of the Beis Hamikdash was made up of two rooms, the Kodesh – where the Menorah stood – and the Kodesh Hakodoshim. The Kodesh was the more external room. The Kodesh Hakodoshim lay deeper within the Beis Hamikdash structure, hidden away from view.

Whilst the Yevanim could corrupt the level of the Kodesh, they were unable to reach the level of the Kodesh Hakodoshim.

In the Mishkan, the prototype of the Beis Hamikdash, the Kodesh Hakodoshim measured 10 Amos by 10 Amos. The number 10 is represented by the letter Yud (י).

Within the word ה"יכל there is a hidden Yud. The vowel under the ה is a Tzeirei. The Tzeirei is pronounced as though there was an additional י after the vowel (to create the 'ey' sound). But this י is not written. Like the Kodesh Hakodoshim hidden in the recesses of the Beis Hamikdash, the extra י in Heichal is hidden.

If we count the hidden י (as though the word was written ה"ייכל) the Gematria is 75. This is greater than the 66 of Yavan, alluding to the fact that they had no power over the Kodesh Hakodoshim.

75 is the Gematria of כהן (Kohen). This is why the victory and miracle of Chanukah came through the Kohanim, who had the power to defeat the Yevanim. More specifically, the miracle of Chanukah is connect-

ed to the Kohen Gadol. The Gemara highlights how the one flask of pure oil that they found was sealed with the signet of the Kohen Gadol.

According to the Mahara"l, the seal was not just a sign that the oil had not been tampered with. The seal of the Kohen Gadol was the power that ensured that this oil could not be defiled by the Yevanim.

The Torah refers to the Kohen Gadol as being Kodesh Kodashim. The Kohein Gadol was on the level of Kodesh Hakodoshim and he was the only person who would enter the Kodesh Hakodoshim. In the face of such holiness, the Yevanim had no power.

Chassidus teaches that we each have within us a Kohein Gadol and Kodesh Hakodoshim.

Like the design of the Beis Hamikdash, our soul also has layers and chambers. The external courtyard (the Azarah) represents our thought, speech and action – our external expressions through which we interact with the world. The Heichal (the Kodesh), with its various Keilim; the Shulchan, Menorah and incense Alter, represents the intellect and emotions of the Neshama. These are how we connect to Hashem through our mind and heart.

The Kodesh Hakodoshim is the very essence of the soul – the Yechidah.

Our connection to Hashem through our thought, speech and action of Torah observance is susceptible to the darkness of Yavan, representing the Yetzer Hara and forces of spiritual corruption. Our emotional and intellectual connections to Hashem are also able to be defiled.

But the essential core of the Neshama cannot be corrupted. It is not a relationship with Hashem through something that we do; either in action, feeling or ideas. It is the essential bond that every Jew has implicitly with Hashem. It is the source of the pure and simple faith and the power of self-sacrifice that every Jew possesses deep within them.

Like the Chashmonaim, the Yechidah is revealed through Mesiras Nefesh - absolute and supra-rational dedication to Hashem. When we access the Holy-of-Holies, the Kohen Gadol within us, not only are we sealed with a force of protection, we have the power to drive away darkness and transform it to light.

Mentioning Chanukah in Al Hamichya

The Gemara¹ records that one year after the victory of the Chashmonaim and the miracle of Chanukah, the Chachamim established the festival of Chanukah to be celebrated as days of Hallel and Hodaah – praise and thanksgiving.

Rashi² explains that this refers to the obligation to recite Hallel and to say Al Hanisim in the blessing of Hodaah. We recite Al Hanisim in the blessing of Hodaah in Shemoneh Esrei (after Modim) and in bentching (after Nodeh Lecha).

Al Hanisim in Bentching

On Shabbos, Yomtov and Rosh Chodesh there is a requirement to mention the day in bentching. The Gemara³ asks whether one is required to mention Chanukah and Purim in bentching;

Perhaps because they are only Rabbinic festivals they need not be mentioned (as opposed to Shabbos, Yomtov and Rosh Chodesh which are Biblical). Or do we say that because it entails Pirsumei Nissa (publicising the miracle) they should be mentioned in bentching?

Rava rules that one is not required to mention Chanukah in bentching, but if one wishes to, they should mention it during the blessing of Hodaah just as it is done in the Shemoneh Esrei.

Tosfos⁴ notes that the requirement to recite Al Hanisim in davening is taken as an obvious requirement and therefore the Gemara's question only pertains to bentching. Tosfos explains that since davening is Betzibbur there is clearly an element of Pirsumei Nissa. Bentching is done at home and therefore has less Pirsumei Nissa.

The Gemara's conclusion is that reciting Al Hanisim in bentching is optional. Nonetheless it has subsequently been accepted as an obligation and has become binding Halacha⁵.

The Shulchan Aruch rules that if one forgot Al Hanisim in either davening or bentching, one need not repeat the Shemoneh Esrei or bentching⁶. The Ram"o adds that if one forgot to say Al Hanisim in bentching after Nodeh Lecha, they can add it as a Harachaman at the point where we recite the Harachaman for other festivals. In Shemoneh Esrei one can add it before the final Yihyu Leratzon⁷.

Mentioning Chanukah in Al Hamichya

The Yerushalmi⁸ teaches that one should mention מעין המאורע (the specialness of the day) in the ברכה מעין שלוש (Al Hamichya)⁹. This is codified as Halacha by the Rambam¹⁰ who writes that on Shabbos and Yomtov one must mention the sanctity of the day. The Shulchan Aruch rules like the Rambam that we should mention Shabbos and Yomtov in Al Hamichya. The Shulchan Aruch also adds Rosh Chodesh¹¹.

And so, on Shabbos we add ורצה והלליצנו ביום ורצה and on Yomtov and Rosh Chodesh we add ... וזכרנו לטובה ביום. - mentioning the name of the specific Yomtov¹².

The Rambam does not mention Chanukah or Purim and the Shulchan Aruch explicitly writes that we do not mention Chanukah and Purim in Al Hamichya.

Why are Chanukah and Purim different?

The Acharonim question why Chanukah and Purim are not mentioned in Al Hamichya. Why are they different from the other Yomim Tovim?

Mahara"m and Levush: The earliest source which discusses this distinction is a Teshuvah of the Mahara"m Rottenberg¹³. He explains that Shabbos and the other Yomim Tovim need only be 'mentioned' and this can be done before the concluding line of Al Hamichya ... כי אלה. Chanukah and Purim must specifically be mentioned in the Bracha of Hodaah. Since the Al Hamichya does not contain an express Hodaah, Al Hanisim cannot be said¹⁴. This answer is also found in the Levush¹⁵, although it seems that it is presented as his own teaching and that he had not seen the Mahara"m.

Lechem Chamudos¹⁶ questions the Mahara"m's distinction. Just as the Ram"o writes that just as (bedieved) one may recite Al Hanisim in the Harachamans at the end of bentching, one could mention Chanukah and Purim at the conclusion of Al Hamichya even though it is not Hodaah. Rather, the distinction is that Chanukah and Purim are only Rabbinic as opposed to Shabbos, Yomtov and Rosh Chodesh which are mentioned in the Torah. This is also the answer of Hagahos Maimonios¹⁷.

Mishna Berura¹⁸, quoting the Gr"a, writes that unlike Shabbos and Yomtov where one is obligated to mention the day in bentching, mentioning Chanukah and Purim in bentching itself is only a minhag. The minhag was only adopted for bentching and was not adopted for Al Hamichya.

Aruch Hashulchan writes that since even for Shemoneh Esrei and bentching one is Yotzai if they did not mention Al Hanisim, one need not mention it in Al Hamichya. Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef¹⁹ questions this logic. On Rosh Chodesh one is also Yotzai bedieved if one forgot Yaaleh Veyavo in bentching and yet we still mention Rosh Chodesh in Al Hamichya²⁰.

Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef²¹ was asked whether one may not mention Chanukah in Al Hamichya or whether it is not required but one may do so if they choose. In his Teshuvah he notes that not everyone agrees that even Shabbos and Yomtov need to be mentioned in Al Hamichya (despite the Yerushalmi and ruling of the Rambam quoted above).

Tosfos²² and Rashba²³ write that the popular practice is not to do so. They suggest that perhaps in former times Shabbos and Yomtov had to be men-

tioned because people would be Koveia to drink wine and eat fruit. However, the Kesef Mishna writes that this argument is not sufficient to push away the Yerushalmi. The Shulchan Aruch rules that we do mention these days in Al Hamichya. Nonetheless we need not add a requirement for Purim and Chanukah (which are only Rabbinic) to a matter which is already in dispute²⁴.

The **Minchas Elozor** of Munkatch²⁵ presents a couple of approaches. His second approach is based on the Tosfos²⁶ who explains that in Shemoneh Esrei it is a given that one must say Al Hanisim because davening is (usually) Betzibbur and there is Pirsumei Nissa. Bentching is usually done at home and so there is less Pirsumei Nissa. Nonetheless we say Al Hanisim in bentching because there is still a degree of Pirsumei Nissa.

The Munkatcher adds that perhaps this is only in bentching because a meal (with bread) is usually eaten in the company of family members or others. Since Mezonos, wine and fruits are usually eaten on one's own, there is no Pirsumei Nissa and so Al Hanisim is not said.

Halachic conclusion

Following the majority of Acharonim²⁷, the contemporary Poskim²⁸ conclude that one should not mention Chanukah or Purim in Al Hamichya. If however one did mention Chanukah or Purim, either in the beginning or end of Al Hamichya, one is nonetheless Yotzai and it does not constitute a Hefsek or an invalidating change to the text of the Brachos.

1. Shabbos 21b

2. ibid

3. 24a

4. 24a מהו להזכיר א

5. See Raviah quoted in the Bach OC 682. Another example is Maariv, which is only a reshuv but has been accepted as a binding obligation.

6. Shulchan Aruch OC 682. See Bach ibid who quotes the Mordechai who rules that because one is obligated to eat a meal (with bread) on Chanukah and Purim, one is obligated to repeat bentching if Al Hanisim was omitted. Maharsha¹ writes that this is only so for the Purim Seudah but does not apply to Chanukah. Their argument revolves around whether there is a chiyuv to have a Seudah on Chanukah. Bach rules like the Mordechai and Raviah.

7. Mishna Berura 682:4 quoting Elya Rabbah

8. Brachos 6:1

9. Note that the Yerushalmi does not mention which days this is required for.

10. Hilchos Brachos 3:13

11. Shulchan Aruch OC 208:12

12. In other Nuschaos for Yomtov one says וזכרנו לטובה ביום ורצה and Rosh Hashona do they use the formula וזכרנו.

13. Siman 70

14. Even though the blessing concludes ... ונודה לך, מניין ההתימה Bracha

15. OC 208:12

16. Quoted in Elya Rabba 208:21

17. On Rambam ibid

18. 208:59

19. Yabia Omer 3:236

20. He does suggest that perhaps the Aruch Hashulchan is referring to the requirement to mention the day in Shemoneh Esrei (as opposed to bentching) where Yaaleh Veyavo on Rosh Chodesh is Meakev unlike Chanukah and Purim.

21. Yabia Omer ibid

22. Brachos 44a על הניח

23. Chiddushim Brachos 44a

24. He adds that this is especially so since even in bentching which is Biblically mandated, Al Hanisim is only a reshuv. If so, Al Hamichya which is only Rabbinic, one need not be concerned.

25. Nimukei Orach Chaim 682

26. Quoted above

27. Shulchan Aruch, Levush, Pri Megadim and others

28. Yabia Omer ibid and Tzitz Eliezer 14:63