

Great Controversies



Second Temple Era and Talmudic Times:

Why Are Judaism and
Greek Philosophy
Incompatible?

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**Monday
11/11/13**

Tonight's lecture

is dedicated by
Adina Hirsch
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in memory of
MosheAron Gross z"l

*and is delivered by
Rabbi Emanuel Feldman
and Rabbi Ilan D. Feldman
in memory of
Amram Hillel Feldman z"l*

JU DAISM AND HELLENISM: LECTURE OUTLINE
Rabbi Emanuel. Feldman, Kislev 8, 5744/. Nov 11, 2013

I

AL HANISSIM PRAYER/
ALEXANDER THE GREAT (TALMUD, TRACTATE *TAMID*, 32b)
KADMUT HA-OLAM/ YESH ME AYIN/ "IN THE BEGINNING..."
TRANSCENDENCE AND SUPERNATURAL VS THE RATIONAL

II

KEY TO UNDERSTANDING CHANUKAH
--MEANING OF THE OIL
--MEANING OF THE MENORAH'S FLAME

RENEWAL

III

POWER OF *YAVAN*/ GREECE/HELLENISM

--THE INTELLECT
--BEAUTY AND HARMONY

JUDAISM AND BEAUTY

IV

SUMMARY

CREATURE VS CREATOR

WORK OF ART VS THE ARTIST

REASON VS REVELATION\

PHYSICAL HARMONY VS. PHYSICAL & SPIRITUAL HARMONY

Special Chanukah Prayer

(ו)על הנסים, ועל הפרקו, ועל הגבורות, ועל התשועות, ועל
המלחמות, שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

(ו)על (And) for the miracles, and for the salvation, and for the mighty deeds, and
for the victories, and for the battles which You performed for our forefathers
in those days, at this time.

בימי In the days of Mattisyahu, the son of Yochanan,
the High Priest, the Hasmonean, and his sons —
when the wicked Greek kingdom rose up against Your
people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and
compel them to stray from the statutes of Your Will*
— You in Your great mercy stood up for them in the
time of their distress. You took up their grievance,
judged their claim, and avenged their wrong.* You
delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the
many into the hands of the few, the impure into the
hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the
righteous, and the wanton* into the hands of the
diligent students of Your Torah. For Yourself You
made a great and holy Name in Your world, and for
Your people Israel you worked a great victory² and
salvation as this very day.* Thereafter,* Your children
came to the Holy of Holies of Your House, cleansed
Your Temple, purified the site of Your Holiness and
kindled lights in the Courtyards of Your Sanctuary;
and they established these eight days of Chanukah to
express thanks and praise to Your great Name.

בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול
חשמונאי ובניו, בשעמדה מלכות
יוון הרשעה על עמך ישראל, להשפיתם
תורתך, ולהעבירם מחקי רצונך.* ואתה
ברחמיה הרבים, עמדת להם בעת צרתם,
רבת את ריבם, דנת את דינם, נקמת את
נקמתם. מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים,
ורבים ביד מעטים, וטמאים ביד טהורים,
ורשעים ביד צדיקים, וזדים ביד עוסקי
תורתך. ולה עשית שם גדול וקדוש
בעולמך, ולעמך ישראל עשית תשועה
גדולה ופרקו כהיום הזה.* ואחר כן באו
בניה לדביר ביתך, ופנו את היכלך, וטהרו
את מקדשך, והדליקו נרות במצרות
קדשך, וקבעו שמונת ימי חנכה אלו,
להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול.

is a torch burning in the room, an extra light is not necessary.^[38]
אף על גב דאיבא מדורה - And if one is a distinguished person, who does not ordinarily use the light of a torch, אף על גב דאיבא מדורה - even though there is a torch in the room אף על גב דאיבא מדורה - it is necessary that he kindle another light, for otherwise it will appear as though he kindled the Chanukah light for his own purposes.

The Gemara reveals the origin of the holiday of Chanukah.^[39]
מאי חנוכה - What is the reason for the Rabbinic Yom Tov of Chanukah? On account of which miracle did the Rabbis establish it?
דחתנו רבנו - It is as the Rabbis taught in a Baraisa (found in Megillas Taanis):
בכ"ה בקליו יומי חנוכה - ON THE 25TH OF KISLEV THE DAYS OF CHANUKAH commence.
תמניא אינון - THEY ARE EIGHT days in all,
ולא למספר בהון ודלא להתענות בהון - ON WHICH IT IS NOT permitted TO EULOGIZE OR TO FAST.
שקשוקבטו - FOR WHEN THE SYRIAN-GREEKS ENTERED THE SANCTUARY,
טמאו כל השקנים שבהיכל - THEY CONTAMINATED ALL THE flasks OF OIL THAT WERE IN THE SANCTUARY,
ובשוקבטו - AND WHEN THE ROYAL HASMONEAN HOUSE GAINED THE UPPER HAND AND VANQUISHED THEM,^[40]
בזמן שחננו - [THE HASMONEANS] SEARCHED the Heichal area AND FOUND ONLY ONE FLASK OF OIL
שלהי חנוכה מונח בחורמו של בנהו גדול - THAT WAS LYING out of sight WITH THE KOHEN GADOL'S SEAL still intact,^[41]
ולא היה בו אלא להדליק - IF

AND IT CONTAINED ONLY enough oil TO KINDLE the Menorah FOR ONE DAY.
ועשה בו נס - However, A MIRACLE WAS PERFORMED WITH [THIS OIL],
והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים - AND THEY KINDLED the lights of the Menorah WITH IT for EIGHT DAYS - until other ritually pure oil could be obtained.^[42]
לשנה אחרת - Recognizing that the miracle had eternal implications, IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR [THE HASMONEANS AND THE SANHEDRIN] ESTABLISHED AND RENDERED [THESE EIGHT DAYS]^[43] permanent FESTIVAL DAYS - WITH RESPECT TO the recital of HALLEL AND "THANKSGIVING."^[44]

The Gemara attempts to derive a Chanukah law from a Mishnah that discusses tort law:

We learned there^[45] in a Mishnah:
אין תיזא מיהת - If A SPARK FLIES OUT FROM UNDER A blacksmith's HAMMER AND WENT AND DAMAGED another's property,
היה - [THE BLACKSMITH] IS LIABLE.
הוא עובר ברשות הרבים - If A CAMEL LADEN WITH FLAX WAS PASSING THROUGH THE PUBLIC DOMAIN
ונקטה פשתנו לתוך ודלקה בגרו של הנותן - AND ITS FLAX PROTRUDED INTO A SHOP AND WAS IGNITED BY THE SHOPKEEPER'S LIGHT,
אז הנותן - AND [THE BURNING FLAX] THEN SET A MANSION^[46] outside ABLAZE,
בעל המגל חייב - THE CAMEL'S OWNER IS LIABLE for all damage to the building.^[47]
אין תיזא מיהת - If,

NOTES

38. Since one can use the illumination provided by the torch for his personal needs, it is evident that the Chanukah light was kindled for the sake of the mitzvah (Rashi).

39. This is actually a very vast and diverse topic; the following few lines of Gemara and our limited commentary hardly do it justice. For an elaboration on the subject, see ArtScroll's Chanukah.

40. That is, when -- after three years of fighting -- the Hasmoneans expelled the Syrian-Greeks from the Temple environs. [The recapture of the Temple and the miracle of Chanukah occurred in the year 3597 (165 B.C.E.). The war would continue for another generation -- until 3621 (140 B.C.E.), when the Sanhedrin and the people proclaimed Shimon, the last surviving son of Matisyahu ben Yochanan, their prince.]

The Gemara's question here -- "What is Chanukah?" -- seeks to identify the miracle that was the basis for the establishment of the holiday. The commentators also discuss the origin of the name Chanukah in this connection. Megillas Taanis and Pesikta Rabbasi (2:1) link the name Chanukah to the rededication (חנינה) of the Altar that took place after the retaking of the Temple from enemy hands (see also Maharsha here). Others (see Ran) interpret חנוכה as a fusion of two words -- חנו, they rested [from warfare], כ"ה, on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev -- an allusion to the Hasmoneans' victory in battle. Maharsha also cites Bereishis Rabbah stating that the construction of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness was completed on this date (although it was not dedicated until the following Nissan).

41. The Rabbis decreed that heathens impart the tumah of a zav through direct contact (מגע), or even by indirectly causing an object to move (טפי). However, the intact seal of the Kohen Gadol indicated that the Greeks never even spotted this one flask, for had they done so the prestigious seal would have suggested to them that the flask contained gold or precious gems, and they would have broken it open (Ran; see Tosafos and Maharsha). Hence, the Hasmoneans were convinced that the flask contained ritually pure olive oil, which was fit for burning in the Temple Menorah.

Citing a ruling in Toras Kohanim that allows the use of tamei oil for kindling the Temple Menorah, Mizrahi (in his commentary on Smag) asks why the Hasmoneans simply did not avail themselves of the contaminated flasks. Pnei Yehoshua (ר"י מאי טובא) explains that it was by providential design that a miracle was performed with the single flask of undefiled oil, to make the Jews aware that they were once more God's beloved, able to perform the mitzvah in a pure, unadulterated fashion.

42. Other oil was located in a place that required a four days' journey to reach. [Meiri identifies this as the city of Tekoa, in the tribal portion of Asher, based on Mishnah, Menachos 85b.] Hence, the oil from the single flask continued to burn miraculously until the round trip could be completed (Ran). Alternatively, since all the Jews were presumed to be

contaminated with corpse tumah as a result of the fighting, seven days were required for their purification and an additional day was needed to crush the olives and process the oil (Beis Yosef to Orach Chaim 670).

43. Beis Yosef (ibid.) asks why the Sages established an eight-day festival; since the single untouched flask contained sufficient oil for one night's kindling, it turns out that the miracle occurred for only seven nights! Over the centuries many great Torah scholars have presented numerous answers to this justly famous question. Beis Yosef himself offers the following three: (a) The Hasmoneans divided the tahor oil into eight parts, and poured only one part into the Menorah's cups each night. Since the one-eighth portion burned the entire night, each night indeed witnessed a miracle. (b) The flask remained full after every filling of the Menorah's cups. Hence, it was evident even on the first night that a miracle was occurring. (c) On the first night the entire contents of the flask were poured into the cups, and the Menorah's lights burned all night. Nevertheless, the cups were still full in the morning [and so it happened each night]. Hence, a miracle occurred on all eight nights.

Meiri writes that on the first day of Chanukah we pronounce blessings for the miracle of our deliverance from the Greek oppressors, and also as an expression of thanks for the discovery of the single flask of undefiled oil.

44. I.e. the Al HaNissim segment in the "thanksgiving" benedictions of Shemonah Esrei and Bircas HaMazon (לה and לה, respectively). However, the Sages did not enact a prohibition on creative labor (melachah) on these days (Rashi).

[Maharam of Rothenburg (cited by Tur, Orach Chaim 670) points out that the Baraisa omits any mention of feasting on Chanukah. Levush (Oruch Chaim 670, cited by Mishnah Berurah §6) explains that Chanukah differs in this respect from Purim (where feasting is an integral part of the festival) because of the nature of the event commemorated. The festival of Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish nation from physical annihilation; hence, the celebration takes a physical form. In contrast, the Syrian-Greeks sought not the physical destruction of the Jews, but their spiritual obliteration. King Antiochus demanded that they reject the Torah and their beliefs. Appropriately, therefore, the celebration of their deliverance expresses itself in spiritual ways -- in the lighting of lamps, and in the recital of Hallel and Al HaNissim (cf. Bach and Turei Zahav ad loc.).]

45. Bava Kamma 62b.

46. Rashi to Bava Kamima 22a; cf. Rashi ibid. 61b, where he explains it to be a large tower.

47. Since his negligence in overloading the camel resulted in the flax protruding into the shop (Rashi). See Bava Kamma 22a-b for a full explanation of the camel owner's liability.

CITATIONS

1. "Open up the gates of righteousness . . . I will thank (*odeh*) the L-ord" (Tehillim/Psalms 118:19-20)
2. Purpose of Chanukah: Praise (Hallel) and thanks (*hoda'ah*) to G-d (Talmud, Shabbos 21b)
3. Leah names Yehudah: "Now I will thank (*odeh*) the L-rd (Bereishis/Genesis 29:35)
4. "The Greeks refused to recognize anything beyond what they could see or touch . . ." (Nachmanides/Ramban [1194-1270] on Vayikra/Leviticus 16:18)
5. "Yaakov arose in the morning, took the stone that he placed around his head . . . and poured oil on it" (Bereishis/Genesis 28:18)
6. "Yaakov set up a pillar of stone where G-d had spoken with him . . . and poured oil on it" (Bereishis/Genesis 35:14)
7. "Who renews in His goodness, the work of Creation every single day . . ." /*Hamechadesh b'tuvo b'chol yom ma'asei b'reishis* (from the Siddur)
8. "Truth is beauty, beauty truth. That is all you know on earth . . . and all you need to know." (Ode on a Grecian Urn)
9. *Sheker hachein v'hevel hayofi . . .* / "Beauty and charm are false and vain" (Mishlei/Proverbs 31:30)

Important Dates In Greek-Jewish Relationship

- 370 BCE Permitted to return to the land of Israel by the Persian emperor Cyrus (only 42,000 of their number actually returning)
- c 360 BCE Rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem is aborted early as Samaritans complain to the emperor.
- 355 BCE In Persia, Haman, the chief minister to King Achashverosh, hatches a plot to annihilate the Jews. Queen Esther comes to the rescue.
- 347 BCE The next Persian monarch, Darius II, Esther's son, allows the rebuilding of the Temple.
- 331 BCE Persian Empire Defeated by Alexander the Great
- 323 BCE Alexander the Great dies; Empire fragments into three large chunks: Egypt; Syria; Greece
- 312 BCE The last of the Men of the Great Assembly, Shimon HaTzaddik, is High Priest.
- 245 BCE Torah is translated into Greek
- 169-167 Antiochus IV Epiphanes terrorizes Jews
- 167 BCE Hasmonean Uprising
- 135 BCE Miracle of Chanukah

