



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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OHR SOMAYACH אוהר שומאך
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Parashat Miketz

Dedicated in memory of Brian Lutch, Benjamin ben Berel, by his son, Joseph Lutch.

Ruth Rosenthal < RuthSF@aol.com > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
Can one use an electric chanukiah?*

Dear Ruth Rosenthal,

A Chanukah menorah must contain enough fuel at the time of lighting to burn for at least half an hour after nightfall. Based on this, Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank, *zatzal*, head of the Rabbinical court in Jerusalem, ruled that one may not use an electric menorah. Electricity is not stored for future use; rather, it is consumed as it is generated. Thus the required amount of "fuel" is not in existence at the time of lighting. (According to this, a battery-operated menorah should be OK, because the fuel actually is there at the time of lighting.)

Another reason not to use an electric menorah is that the menorah we use commemorates the Menorah in the Temple and the miracle that occurred there. Our menorah, therefore, should resemble the one in the Temple. For that reason, many people use olive oil for fuel. Recently, someone marketed candles made of congealed olive oil for use as Chanukah and Friday night candles!

Leonard Hirschel < yanky@mail.idt.net > wrote:

Did the Menorah in the Temple have 6 or 8 branches?

Dear Leonard Hirschel,

The Menorah in the Temple had six or seven branches, depending on whether or not you call the central stem a "branch." It had six branches coming out of a central stem. Each branch had a flame on top, and the central stem also had a flame on top. Altogether, the Menorah had seven lamps.

Sources:

- Exodus 25:32,37
- Numbers 8:2

Mike < mikebrad@netspace.net.au > wrote:

What would have happened if the Greeks won?

Josh from Melbourne < superjosh@hotmail.com > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
My name is Josh and I go to Bialik College, Melbourne, Australia. I just wanted to ask you a few questions about Chanukah. Why is Chanukah so important? What is the main feature of Chanukah? What do you think would happen if the Greeks were successful in the battle against the Maccabees? Why were the Maccabees chosen to fight the Greeks? Thank you for your time and I hope to hear from you soon. From your Jewish friend, Josh.*

Dear Mike and Josh,

Chanukah is so important because it means the victory of Torah over Greek philosophy.

Unlike previous pagan ideas so revolting to Jews, Greek paganism was bound up with beauty, art and philosophy. Therefore, it captured the imagination of many Jews. Many Jews became "Greekified," or "Hellenists."

This may surprise you, but the Greeks did win. You see, there was a battle and there was a war. The Maccabees won the battle and were able to hold on for a while but eventually they succumbed to Pompeii's conquest 80 years later.

But the miracle of the oil inspired us to realize that G-d is with us no matter what. Without that inspiration the Jewish People might not have been able to survive future periods of even greater persecution.

Why the Maccabees? Because their father Mattityahu's faith in G-d gave him the courage to stand up against power and corruption. The name Maccabee comes from the Hebrew acronym "*Mi Camocha B'eilim Hashem*" — "who amongst the mighty is like You, G-d?" Although the Maccabee's military victory didn't last, the miraculous events of the war and the oil inscribed the message of faith and loyalty indelibly into the Jewish soul.

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to ohr@virtual.co.il. Or use our form at <http://www.ohr.org.il/ask/page/ask.htm>. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz, Rabbi Mordechai Becher and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

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Will Sleever <williams@ovnet.com> wrote:

I read through several areas of the origins of Chanukah. There was also reference to the books of Maccabees and Judith. Are these considered false history or true history? I am aware that various peoples like to trace their history to your civilization. I am aware that other religions have Maccabees I and II and Judith in their writings. In your opinion are these events portrayed in these books false or true or mixed?

Dear Will Sleever,

These books and others like them are part of what is known as the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha are not considered holy, inspired or prophetically written. Therefore, they are not necessarily historically accurate. The Book of Maccabees describes events already discussed in the Talmud and hence is generally considered more accurate than the other books of the apocrypha. Another account is the *Scroll of Antiochus*, which is printed in the Siddur Otzar Hatefillot. Some communities used to read the *Scroll of Antiochus* during Chanukah on Shabbat afternoon.

Helena from Troy, Michigan <esde@traversecity.com> wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
What's the source for "Chanukah gelt" — giving money or presents on Chanukah. Does it have a Jewish source, or is it something we copied from others so Jewish kids wouldn't feel left out? Does it have any significance? Thank you.*

Dear Helena,

"Chanukah gelt" is a Jewish custom rooted in the Talmud.

The Talmud states that even a very poor person must light Chanukah lights, even if he can't afford it. A person with no money is required to go "knocking on doors" until he collects enough to buy at least one candle for each night of Chanukah.

The Torah concept of charity — *tzeddakah* — requires us to help the recipient in the most dignified manner possible. Therefore, the custom arose to give gifts of money during Chanukah so that someone who needs extra money for Chanukah candles can receive it in the form of "Chanukah gelt."

Sources:

- Heard from Rabbi Dovid Cohen

David Welsh <dwelsh@wgn.net> wrote:

I heard in a lecture by a leader of the Israel Museum that the name given to the Chanukah candelabra, Chanukiah, is not a correct way to refer to it. He said that the word Chanukiah was coined in the 1910's for a song written in Israel. I am a tour leader at the Skirball Museum in Los Angeles, California and am anxious to be informed on this subject. Can you help? Thank you & Shalom.

Dear David Welsh,

In traditional Jewish literature the candelabra for Chanukah is called either *menorah* or *ner Chanukah*, "candle of Chanukah." *Chanukiah* is a modern Hebrew term.

Yiddle Riddle

Where does the word Chanukah appear in this week's Parsha (Mikeitz)? (That is, all the letters of the word "Chanukah" are written together, although they are out of order.)

Answer: "Yosef said to his attendant, 'slaughter and prepare (the meal)....' " (Bereishis 43:16) The word for "and prepare" — "והכך" (vav - hay - chaf - nun sofit) — plus the last letter of the word "slaughter" — "טבח" (tet - bayt - chet) — spell "Chanukah" when they are rearranged.