Ask The Rabbi
Researching at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:
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Dedicated in memory of Brian Lutch, Benyamin ben Berel, by his son, Joseph Lutch.

Ruth Rosenthal <RuthSF@aol.com> wrote:
Dear Leonard Hirschel,
Can one use an electric chanukiah?

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’elim 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.
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?

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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.

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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” — “וָעָנֵן” (vav - hay - chaf - nun sofit) — plus the last letter of the word “slaughter” — “נָבַע” (tet - bayt - chet) — spell “Chanukah” when they are rearranged.

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Dedication opportunities are available for Ask The Rabbi — Please contact us for details.