

Parsha Encounters

www.cckollel.org

29 Kislev 5766/December 30, 2005

Parshas Mikeitz - Rabbi Shmuel Shapiro

The Secret of the Flame

Looking around our city streets at this time of year, we are dazzled with myriads of colorful lights on lawns, lampposts and shopping malls. The small flames flickering through the windows of Jewish homes seem so pale in comparison. Let us attempt to appreciate these little flames which radiate modestly inside a Jewish home.

We celebrate Chanukah with the mitzvah of lighting *neiros*. This commemorates the miraculous victory of the Chashmonaim which enabled them to repossess the bais hamikdash in Yerushalayim and the miraculous finding of pure oil and its burning for seven days. Historically speaking however, this miracle did not coincide with the end of the fighting. Complete Jewish independence was only achieved years later. What then is the significance of this kindling?

The setting of the story of Chanukah was the Jewish commonwealth in Eretz Yisrael during the Second Temple. The Men of the Great Assembly knew that the shechina and miracles that Hashem's presence brought to the first bais hamikdash would not be present in the second. They prayed that Hashem reveal the light of *torah she'baal peh* (oral Torah). Indeed the illumination of *torah she'baal peh* shone in its full glory, beginning with the Men of the Great Assembly and culminating with the great Tanaim. Hashem's presence in this period rested upon those who studied the torah. This was the message given to Zecharia hanavi that we read in this week's haftorah. Zecharia returned to Yerushalayim with the Babylonian exiles to build the second bais hamikdash. He was shown a vision of a seven branched menorah and told "*lo b'chayil v'lo bekoach*", "not with armies nor strength, only through my spirit says Hashem". The success of the Jewish people in the coming era would not be with physical might, rather with the power of torah represented by the menorah.

Each avodah in the Bais Hamikdash brought unique physical and spiritual blessings. The menorah, explains the Netziv, was designed to enhance *pilpul shel torah*, the analyzing and questioning, proving and refuting, which are the tools of torah study. When R' Tarfon would be told a befitting torah thought, he would exclaim "*kaftor vaferach!*" He complimented a novel torah idea by

using the knobs and flowers engraved on the menorah as a metaphor for its beauty. Indeed the flames of the menorah radiated with the special light that illuminated our minds with torah understanding.

The Greeks studied the physical world around us. Their sciences and arts are indeed *chochma*. "If someone tells you that there is wisdom amongst the gentile nations, believe it", teach our sages. Yet our Chazal compare Greek wisdom to darkness. Why so?

The axioms of nature controlling the physical world are unchanging. Their study is thus in a sense bound - by the laws of nature. Torah study transcends nature and frees one from the limitations of the physical world. So great is this illumination, that other wisdoms dim to darkness in comparison. (See Alei Shor Vol. 2 on Chanukah for more elaboration.)

The Greeks had no problem with the written torah. They studied many forms of wisdom and had even translated the written torah to Greek. *Torah she'baal peh*, however, was anathema to the Greek way of life. The light it sheds on every aspect of Jewish life and the holiness it brings into every Jewish home was something they attempted to destroy. The rekindling of the menorah representing this spiritual triumph, was the true accomplishment of the victory. The light of the torah would continue to blaze.

Just as the menorah in the bais hamikdash did, our *neiros* of Chanukah glow with the light of torah she'baal peh. One who is accustomed to lighting them will merit sons who are talmidei chachamim, says the gemarah. Indeed, even gazing at the flames is a *segulah* to understand torah.

The light of our simple *neiros* have the capacity to diminish the enveloping darkness of secular society around us. We light them to illuminate our homes with torah and proclaim that our homes are islands of holiness in the sea of society. May we merit to create the environment that will cultivate our children's love for torah and enable them to radiate with its light.

Rabbi Shapiro learns full-time at the kollel.

Halacha Encounters

Chanukah Leftovers

Rabbi Avi Weinrib

As each Yom Tov comes to a close, we are filled with a sense of loss as we return to our day-to-day life. There are also practical issues such as what to do with the leftover items that were used in the performance of the various Mitzvos throughout the Yom Tov. In this week's Halacha Encounters we will discuss what one should do with the leftover wicks, oil etc. that were used on Chanukah.

The Rosh in the second Perek of Shabbos [simon 9] quotes the Shiltos of R' Achai that one should take the leftover oil from the menorah that was not burned and burn it by itself. The reason is that since it was used in the performance of the mitzvah, and therefore set aside for that purpose, it is not longer acceptable to use it for any other purpose. The Sh"ut Shraga Hameir [Volume 5-118] points out that from the fact that one is required to burn it, it's clear that one cannot use it even for the performance of a mitzvah such as Shabbos candles. The Mishna Berura [676-19] writes that one should not even save it for next year's Chanukah lights, as we are concerned that one may forget what this oil was set aside for and come to use it for some other purpose.

The Mishna Berura [676-18] qualifies this Halacha in that it only applies to the oil that was necessary to fulfill the minimum requirement, which is the amount of oil which would burn one half hour past nightfall. Any extra oil which was placed in the menorah and did not fully burn is not considered set aside for the mitzvah. According to this opinion, unless one's lights somehow went out before this short period of time the oil could be disposed of in a regular manner. However, there are two reasons why this may not be the case. Firstly, the Mishna Berura [ibid.] mentions an opinion that unless one clearly stipulated that only the minimal amount should be considered set aside for the mitzvah, all of the oil placed in the menorah would be considered set aside. Being that most people do not make such a stipulation, according to this opinion all of it should be burned. Furthermore, many poskim [see Moadim Uzmanim 2-141 and 6-86, Halichos Shlomo Volume II 15-8] are of the opinion that, nowadays, since people are found in the street many hours later than in the days of Chazal one should have his menorah burn much later than one half hour past nightfall [see Halichos Shlomo ibid. that R' Shlomo Zalman zt"l would put enough oil that his menorah

could burn until approximately 11:00 PM]. This being the case, when a person fills up his menorah he would want it all to be part of the mitzvah in order to fulfill the mitzvah according to all opinions [This point is also mentioned in sefer Halichos Chag B'Chag Chapter 9 Footnote 43]. In summation, it would seem that all the oil put into the glass would be considered set aside for the mitzvah.

The question then remains how should one deal with the leftover oil on the eighth night [On earlier nights one can simply reuse it for the next night's lighting M.B. 677-17]. The Shulchan Aruch rules that one should burn the oil so that it should not be left around and come to be used. It is also acceptable to dispose of the oil in an alternative manner provided that it is not done so in a degrading fashion. Therefore, one can only dispose of it in the trash if it is first placed in a bag which is tied shut. Placing it directly into the trash which is full of many repulsive items is a disgrace. One should also not pour it down the sink as this too is not a respectful means of disposal [oral ruling from R' Shmuel Fuerst shlit'a]. The above issue applies to the used wicks as well and one should either burn them or wrap and then dispose of them in the trash. Oil left over in the bottle may be used for any purpose as *hazmanh lav milsah*, an item merely set aside but not used in the performance of the mitzvah attains no holiness.

The glass cups used in the menorah attain a different status than the oil or wicks. While the oil and wick were actually used as part of the mitzvah itself, the cup is merely facilitating the performance of the mitzvah. Therefore, one may dispose of the cups in any manner and use them afterwards for any purpose. R' Elyashiv shlit"l is quoted [Ginzei Kodesh 19-13] that although the same ruling should apply to the menorah as well, however, since it is clearly recognizable that it was used in the performance of a mitzvah one should not dispose of it in a degrading manner and should first wrap it before disposing of it.

Shabbos Wicks

Used wicks from the Shabbos candles according to many Poskim [See Ginzei Kodesh 19-12] are of similar status to the Chanukah wicks and should be wrapped before disposing of them. However, R' Shlomo Zalman zt"l was of the opinion that one can dispose of used Shabbos wicks even directly into the trash. [See Shmiras Shabbos Chapter 43-44 for an explanation see also Tikunim U meelum ibid.]

Rabbi Weinrib, an alumnus of the kollel, is the Manhig Ruchni of Agudas Yisroel of West Rogers Park.