

TORAH THOUGHTS – RESPONSE TO ‘HYPOCRISY OF HANUKKAH’ NYT OPINION PIECE

On Sunday the Times ran an article by novelist Michael David Lukas entitled “The Hypocrisy of Hanukkah,” in which he describes a dialogue with his daughter.

“Dada, can we celebrate Christmas?” “We don’t celebrate Christmas,” I told her, putting on my serious voice. “We celebrate Hanukkah.” Like generations of Jewish parents before me, I did my best to sell her on the relative merits of Hanukkah. True, Christmas might have those sparkly trees, ornaments and fruitcake. But we have latkes, jelly doughnuts and eight nights of presents. “Do we have Santa?” she asked, hopefully. “No,” I said, and her face dropped. “They do.”

Sadly, the author falls into the trap of trying to make Hanukkah the Jewish Christmas, and it is most definitely not that. On December 25th, Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus; it and Easter are the holiest days of their year. In contrast, Hanukkah, albeit inspiring, is a minor festival.

My teacher Dr. Ron Wolfson once wrote, “Yes, they have Christmas. But we have Hanukkah, Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchas Torah, Tu Bshevat, Purim, Passover, Yom Ha’atzmaut (Israel Independence Day), Shavuot, and more.” In other words, we should embrace our entire tradition instead of overemphasizing one holiday, especially a minor one.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. To read the entire article by Mr. Lukas, go to <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/01/opinion/sunday/the-hypocrisy-of-hanukkah.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fopinion&action=click&contentCollection=opinion®ion=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=9&pgtype=sectionfront>
2. Do your children feel left out at this time of year? What do you tell them? What do you think of Dr. Wolfson’s response? How did you feel as a child?
3. To read more about what’s generally known as ‘The December Dilemma’ go to <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-december-dilemma/>
4. In case you didn’t see them, here are some awesome Hanukkah videos!
 - a. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9P30ckBf1wk&start_radio=1&list=RD9P30ckBf1wk
 - b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uI74Bkc8j9k>
 - c. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAbTDHblxFM>

Shabbat shalom and Happy Hanukkah!!

Rabbi Pont