

December 2015–April 2016

כסלו-אדר 5776

קול מבושר Kol MevaSer

A PUBLICATION OF THE KEMP MILL SYNAGOGUE



A Picture of Garin Ometz Akko

Last year, KMS members collectively contributed over \$11,000 to support Garin Ometz Akko—a modern Orthodox community in the northern city of Akko, whose members seek to strengthen the city through their chesed, community-building, education and Torah activities. The KMS Israel Committee hopes that these photographs will help to give our readers some insight into the Garin's activities.



Volunteers put greeting cards from KMS into Pesach food packages.



Shiurim are offered around the city for a wide and diverse audience.



Hachnasat Sefer Torah on the occasion of the dedication of the Garin's Community Center

more photos on page 20



Educational enrichment activities at the Education Center

The publication of *Kol MevaSer* is supported by a generous grant from Norman and Suzanne Javitt in memory of Nicholas Markovits, the father and grandfather, respectively, of KMS members Suzanne and Gail Javitt.

Dear Gabbai

by Ira Rabin

Dear Gabbai,

Do we say Adir Adirenu during Kedushah on Shabbat Chol Ha'moed? I seem to remember sometimes saying it and sometimes not.

Holiday Chazzan

Dear Holiday Chazzan,

Though shuls have different customs regarding Adir Adirenu, we say it on Shabbat Chol Ha'moed Sukkot but *not* on Shabbat Chol Ha'moed Pesach. Unlike on Pesach, when the same sacrifice was brought each day, each day of Sukkot is treated as its own yom tov because different sacrifices were brought each day. It is for this reason as well that on Shabbat Chol Ha'moed Sukkot during the brachot after the haftarah we say "yom chag ha sukkot ha'zeh" and "mekadesh Yisrael v'hazmanim" whereas on Shabbat Chol Ha'moed Pesach we just say the regular Shabbat brachot.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS

1. What are the 4 brachot that are said only once a year both in Israel and outside of Israel? Bonus: What are additional brachot said once a year that are said only in Israel?
2. The Friday night zemer "Tzama Nafshi" used to be incorporated into the davening liturgy in some

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FROM THE RABBI

Aesthetics and Religion: The Unlikely Bedfellows of Chanukah Observance

by Rabbi Brahm Weinberg
Chanukah 5776



Physical beauty is one of the defining characteristics of our celebration of the holiday of Chanukah. The mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles is guided by a deep-seated imperative to tell the story of the defeat of the Syrian Greeks and the miracle of the oil in the most beautiful fashion. To this end, the Shulchan Aruch¹ rules that one must use a clean and fresh chanukia that has not been rendered distasteful from residue and burns. The commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch² go even further, instructing us to toil to make both the chanukia as well as the lights as beautiful as we can to the best of our abilities.

Instinctively, one might imagine a stark divide between the spiritual and the aesthetic. Teleological activity, actions directed towards a desired end whether it be religious, ethical, or moral, involves abstraction, distant vision, contemplation of the intangible, and grappling with goals that can never be fully reached. Teleological thinking, especially in the realm of religion, involves the contemplation of transcendence, of the unknown, of the unreachable in terms of godliness and even in terms of our own human perfection. By contrast, the aesthetic is about immanence; it is about perceived immediacy. The aesthetic involves dealing with what is before you and what is knowable.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch uses the ethical and the aesthetic as the paradigms of seemingly dichotomous pursuits in distinguishing the Jewish people from the ancient Greeks. As Noach emerges from his drunkenness to make proclamations about his children he says:

בראשית פרשת נח פרק ט

יפת אלקים ליפת וישכן באהלי־שם

Breishit 9:27

God enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.

R.S.R. Hirsch³ explains this blessing as an indication of what the descendants of Shem and Japheth would accomplish in the world:

The stem of Japheth reaches its fullest blossoming in the Greeks; that of Shem in the Hebrews, Israel.... Japheth has ennobled the world aesthetically. Shem has enlightened it spiritually and morally.

If this is indeed so, then why would halacha call for the

pursuit of an aesthetic quality in the performance of mitzvot? Specifically, why would the very holiday that celebrates the victory of the Jewish people over the Hellenist Greeks be permeated with the halachic mandate to infuse its mitzvot with physical beauty?

In order to answer this question we must further explore and define the nature of the aesthetic in the celebration of Chanukah.

The impulse of the Chashmonaim themselves in the aftermath of the military victory and the cleansing of the Beit Hamikdash was to beautify the kindling of the menorah in whatever way possible. The golden menorah in the Beit Hamikdash had been pillaged by the Syrian Greeks. When the Chashmonaim reconquered the Beit Hamikdash, they had to improvise by creating a rough menorah made of their own iron spears. Even though the iron spears were nowhere near as beautiful as the golden menorah that once stood, they were halachically valid for the lighting of the menorah. Yet, the Gemara says that the Chashmonaim were not satisfied:

מנחות כח :

שפודים של ברזל היו וחיפום בבצץ העשירו עשאו של כסף חזרו והעשירו עשאו של זהב

Menachot 28b

They [the branches of their menorah] were iron rods, and they [the Chashmonaim] coated them with tin. When they became wealthier, they made the branches of silver. When they became still wealthier, they made the branches of gold

The Chashmonaim had the impulse to make the menorah and the lights it displayed ever more beautiful. They coated the iron spears in whatever way they could with the most precious metals they could find in order to achieve that aim.

The concern that the Chashmonaim displayed for the aesthetic dimension of lighting the menorah in the rededicated Beit Hamikdash shaped the character of the mitzvah of Chanukah lights that commemorates that event for all generations.

In extremely uncharacteristic fashion, after detailing the essence of the mitzvah of Chanukah lights, the Gemara moves immediately to instruct us about how to perform the mitzvah in *more* beautiful ways:

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Kemp Mill Sababa

by Ina Lerman

Sababa is the Hebrew slang word for “cool and wonderful!” We want everyone who visits Israel to be inspired and amazed, and to have *fun*. To help future visitors to Israel, we are establishing “K. M. Sababa” as a way to refer your friends to your favorite off-the-beaten-path places in Israel. If you have visited Israel recently (in the past two years), we want you to list your favorite places and experiences that don’t usually make it into the tour books. You’ll find the link to our simple form on the KMS home page.

Don’t wait another minute. Your friends are waiting for your recommendations so they can plan their next trips to Israel.

Share Your Favorite:

- Restaurants
- Places to stay
- Hikes
- Off-the-beaten-path museums, and religious and historical sites

- Activities for kids and teens
- Wineries
- Tour guides and group tours
- Synagogues and Shabbat destinations
- Jewish educational programs
- Parks and nature experiences
- Volunteer experiences
- Unique shopping

Here’s an example of the sort of information we hope to collect: An amazing park for kids of all ages, *Gan B’Ivrit* is a municipal park in Rishon LeZion. There are shady places to play and activities built around Hebrew letters. Our special tip: bring along bikes or scooters and a change of clothes if the water fountains are running.

To volunteer to help edit the content or for more information, contact Nechumah Getz (nechumah@gmail.com) or Ina Lerman (ilerman@verizon.net).



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Miracle of Public Dedication and Sacrifice

by Benny Berkowitz



The story of Chanukah is retold succinctly in the al hanissim paragraph recited during our prayers and birkat hamazon. Al hanissim focuses on the Maccabees and their victory over the Greeks. The miracle of the lights is not explicitly mentioned in the prayer and the paragraph makes only a passing reference to the lighting

of the menorah after re-purifying the Temple. The miracle outlined in al hanissim is the military victory over the Greeks and the ability of a small, weak group to defeat a large, strong enemy. If this is true, then why has the menorah and its lights become a symbol and focus for our practice on Chanukah?

The story of Chanukah highlights the miraculous strength the Jewish community can achieve when working together in the service of God. If we come together and declare our commitment to God, God assists us in overcoming the most difficult circumstances. In fact, the name “Maccabee” comes from the first letters of the four Hebrew words we recite each day before shemoneh esrei, Mi kamocha ba’elim Adonai, “Who is like you, Lord, among the mighty.” The Maccabees united the Jews with their public declaration and battle cry in the service of God. They were then able to overcome the most powerful army of the era.

The path before the Maccabees was not easy. The victory of the Maccabees was not like the Exodus from Egypt, when God fought the battle at the Red Sea. The Maccabees fought hard, lost many soldiers, but were ultimately able to claim a miraculous victory with the help of God. Since the Jews worked tirelessly in the service of God, their efforts were rewarded in the victory we celebrate over Chanukah and read about in the al hanissim. But how does our practice of lighting the menorah remind us of the hard work and dedication in the public service of God which led to a military victory?

When the Maccabees entered the Temple, little oil was found to light the menorah. Interestingly, when we first learn of the service of the menorah in the Torah, Aharon is commanded to prepare the lights, but the verb used to describe the menorah service is not to light (lehadlik), but rather to lift up (behaalotecha). Many of the commentaries focus on the specific language of this verse and explain that an integral part of the service was the work of cleaning and preparing the oil, cups, and wicks of the menorah. This preparation is a critical part

of the service. Once the preparation is complete the lights are lit, but an essential part of the service is the hard work and preparation the priest puts into making the conditions right for the flame to rise and burn.

The hard work of preparing the menorah and its place in the Temple service provides a connection between the miraculous military victory and the lighting of the menorah on Chanukah. The Maccabees engaged in the difficult task of fighting the Greeks. Their efforts were rewarded with a miraculous victory and they rededicated the Temple. When the Maccabees re-entered the Temple they engaged in the hard work of cleaning the menorah and preparing its wicks, cups and oil in the Temple service. Just as the Maccabees merited a miracle by serving God in the battlefield, when they engaged in the sacred service of preparing the menorah for lighting, God helped them by performing a miracle and letting the oil last for eight days. Just as the preparation and effort on the battlefield led to the miraculous military victory, the Temple service of preparing the menorah led to the miraculous burning of the oil.

We publicly display our menorahs for the world to see. The display highlights the very public efforts and battle cry of the Maccabees to unite the Jews in the collective efforts against the Greeks. These efforts effectively lit the way for the re-dedication of the Temple and the service of God. As the menorah is lit every year, we are reminded of the public dedication and sacrifice of the Maccabees, the possibility of miracles for those who engage in divine service, and the everlasting power of a unified community.

The past year-and-a-half has been a long effort that we have undertaken in the service of God and the community. Many people worked tirelessly in the rabbinic search, the celebration of Rabbi Bieler, our capital improvements, and maintaining the community. We did all we could, and with God’s help we have welcomed Rabbi and Elana Weinberg, improved our synagogue, and created a more unified community than we could have imagined when the process began. We are grateful to God for granting us this result.

To all of the dedicated volunteers, staff and members of the community, please continue your sacred service on behalf of the community so God may continue to light the way and allow our collective flame to burn stronger and brighter than we could possibly have imagined.





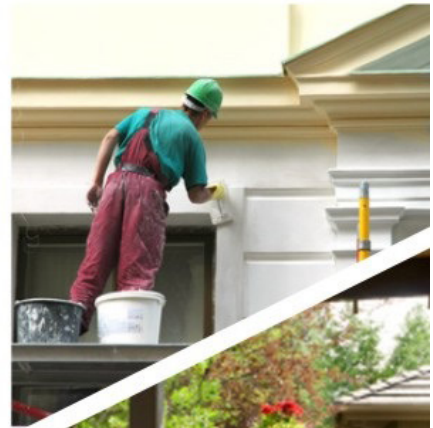
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Tishrei at KMS: It Takes a Village

by Lauren Shaham

They say it takes a village, and there is no better example of that than Tishrei at KMS. Dozens of shul members help orchestrate a complicated month of davening, programming, learning, multiple Kiddushim, and so much more. This year, we added an additional minyan to accommodate the more than 1,000 adults and children who were at KMS for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Tishrei is perhaps the best example of the KMS community coming together to help each other celebrate and be closer to Hashem. Planning starts in the spring and the work doesn't end until after Havdallah on Simchat Torah. And then we debrief and plan for how we can do better next year. We give our thanks to everyone who contributed:

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David Taragin

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Lauren Shaham

Kol MevasSer

Barbara Trainin Blank
Risë Goldstein
Gail Javitt
Tsvi Lieber
Mel Plotinsky

Organized Sukkah hop

Laura Goldman
Debby Levitt

Seating charts (twice)

Jason Mintz

Wrote brochure on Simchat Torah honorees

Marcy Lieber

Chair, child care

Alon Cohen

Ran youth groups

Rachel Levitt-Klein

Child care advice

Sara Elikan

Helped with child care planning

Adam Faledor

Child care help (made all signs)

Jen Tabin

Sukkah decorations

Lisi Levisohn
Elana Stein

Youth programing on Rosh HaShana

Daniel Siesser

Supervise kids putting out appeal cards

Natanya Nobel

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From the World Zionist Congress

by Evonne Marzouk

From October 15-23, I was in Israel to participate in the World Zionist Congress (WZC) in Jerusalem. The WZC includes over 500 representatives of the Jewish people, including both Diaspora and Israeli political parties. It wields control over Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (KKL), or Israel's Jewish National Fund, which owns a significant percentage of Israel's land; the Jewish Agency for Israel; and the World Zionist Organization.¹

While this year's WZC made news for a variety of reasons,² my specific role was to serve as an alternate for the Green Zionist Alliance, a small party within the Congress. I was invited to attend to encourage specific environmental actions in Israel, which are within the realm of the WZC and KKL. My team—which included Reconstructionist Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb and Green Zionist Alliance President David Krantz—successfully brought two resolutions through the process, both of which passed with overwhelming support. The resolutions will help protect Israel's water and encourage sustainability plans in the coming seven-year Shemittah cycle.³

Given the current situation, I wondered if it would be safe

to go to Israel right now. While I was there, I found people more anxious than usual, but doing their best to go on with their lives. Shopkeepers said business was slow; they appreciated my patronage. I made the personal choice to avoid buses and the West Bank. But otherwise, gathering my courage, I was able to do everything I wanted, including visiting the Old City and the Kotel, King George and Ben Yehuda Street, and Machane Yehuda; and of course eating in many, many wonderful restaurants. I wasn't alone: there were always other brave Israelis and tourists walking around, even at night. I heard that no one from the WZC had cancelled their trip.

Before I left for the trip, I was inspired by words in our prayers and texts that encourage strength and courage. It took both for me to go to Israel and be successful there. I'm so glad I did.

NOTES:

¹<http://www.jta.org/2015/01/26/news-opinion/united-states/world-zionist-congress-elections-a-voters-guide>

²See <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/netanyahus-speech-to-the-37th-world-zionist-congress/2015/10/21/>

³<http://www.jpost.com/Business-and-Innovation/Environment/Zionist-Congress-passes-two-green-resolutions-429866>



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Shabbat 21a

The mitzvah of Chanukah is for each family to light one light. *Those who beautify* light one light for each individual. According to Beit Shammai, *those who beautify still more* light eight lights on the first day, and then reduce by one per day. According to Beit Hillel, they light one light on the first day, and then increase by one per day.⁴

The Gemara presents the enactment of Chanukah lights as a three-tiered mitzvah. At the very basic level, one could fulfill the mitzvah by lighting one candle per household per night. In order to fulfill the mitzvah in a beautiful fashion, one would have to light one candle per person per night. Finally, if one wished to perform the mitzvah in the *most* beautiful fashion, one would have to light multiple candles per person per night. Additional lights yield additional aesthetic quality to the mitzvah and therefore increased visibility, increased impact upon onlookers, and increased publicization of the miracle.⁵

The notion that halacha places value upon the aesthetic and recognizes its potential effect upon human beings is not limited to Chanukah at all. In fact, the Gemara is replete with references to beauty and its significance. Our sages were keenly aware of the great impact that beauty can have on the experience of the human being. In a remarkable passage in Masechet Shabbat, the Gemara explains that:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף נז עמוד ב
שלשה מרחיבין דעתו של אדם, אלו הן: דירה נאה, ואשה נאה,
וכלים נאים.

Brachot 57b

Three things expand the mind of man: a beautiful house, a beautiful wife, and beautiful possessions.

Beyond the praise of the aesthetic, the Gemara actually concretizes the value of physical beauty into action by specifying that mitzvot are to be performed in a beautiful manner generating a halachic requirement known as *hidur mitzvah*, the beautification of the mitzvah.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף קלג עמוד ב
דתניא: זה אלי, ואנוהו - התנאה לפניו במצות; עשה לפניו סוכה
נאה, ולולב נאה, ושופר נאה, ציצית נאה, ספר תורה נאה וכתוב
בו לשמו בדיו נאה, בקולמוס נאה, בלבלר אומן וכורכו
בשיראין נאין.

Shabbat 133b

For it was taught [in a Braita]: This is my God, and I will adorn him: [i.e.,] adorn thyself before Him in [the fulfillment of] precepts. [Thus:] make a beautiful sukkah

in His honor, a beautiful lulav, a beautiful shofar, beautiful fringes, and a beautiful Scroll of the Law, and write it with fine ink, a fine reed [-pen], and a skilled penman, and wrap it about with beautiful silks.

Hidur mitzvah mandates that, in many cases, we enhance the basic performance of a mitzvah by beautifying it in some way.⁶

Some of the medieval commentaries believed that the *hidur* of Chanukah lights falls in to this broad mandate of *hidur mitzvah* that exists in so many realms. Rabbenu Chananel⁷ says that the meaning of “*mehadrin*” in lighting Chanukah lights is like all cases of “*mehadre mitzvot*,” beautifiers of mitzvot as is described in other passages of the Gemara such as Bava Kama 9b.⁸ Nevertheless, there is much evidence to suggest that the intense focus on the aesthetics of Chanukah falls in a category of its own.

It is fairly noticeable that the requirement of *hidur* in Chanukah lights far exceeds the scope of what is expected under the broad banner of *hidur mitzvah*. Firstly, while *hidur* exists as a framework for the performance of other mitzvot, the layers of beautification demanded in the domain of Chanukah are unparalleled. The concept of *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, of the beautification of the beautification of a mitzvah does not exist anywhere else in halacha. Secondly, even the basic level of *mehadrin* requires more involvement than would be required under the parameters of *hidur mitzvah*. Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Halevi Soloveitchik (Gri”z)⁹, in his novella on the Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah*, demonstrates this by pointing to a halacha about expenditures for mitzvot. The Gemara in Masechet Bava Kama says:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא קמא דף ט עמוד ב
אמר ר' זירא: בהידור מצוה - עד שליש במצוה

Bava Kama 9b

R. Zeira said: When it comes to *hidur mitzvah*—up to a third of the mitzvah

R. Zeira mandates that one is only allowed to spend an extra third above the cost of the mitzvah itself in order to beautify it. If the regular lulav costs nine dollars then one could spend up to twelve dollars in order to buy a beautiful one but not more. Yet, says the Gri”z, if you think about the case of Chanukah candles, the *mehadrin* level alone (not to mention the *mehadrin min hamehadrin*) requires a person to increase the expenditures or volume of the mitzvah by much more than that! On the second day alone one must increase by one hundred percent (from one candle to two), the third day by two hundred percent (from one candle to three) and so on... This indicates that perhaps the beautification of Chanukah falls beyond the parameters of *hidur mitzvah* that exist in other areas of halacha.

Not only is the scope of *hidur*, beautification, different in the case of Chanukah, but it is possible that the relationship of

the aesthetic quality to the mitzvah itself is different. When it comes to Chanukah, the aesthetic may actually be *intrinsic* to the mitzvah as opposed to just an added enhancement. This is best illustrated by the question of whether one could say a bracha, a blessing, upon the hidur, the beautification of the mitzvah of Chanukah lights (i.e., upon the extra candles one lights beyond the single flame for the household). If the answer is yes, that would indicate that the hidur, the beautification is part of the mitzvah itself rather than extrinsic. In reality this question seldom arises: the performance of the basic mitzvah and the added hidur coincide and, therefore, fall under one bracha that one says before lighting any of the candles. When we light two candles on the second night of Chanukah we say a bracha that covers both the first candle (the one candle that fulfils the baseline mitzvah of the evening) and also the second candle (the mehadrin level).¹⁰ What would happen if a person only had one candle to light on the second night of Chanukah and immediately after reciting the bracha and lighting it they acquired a second candle? All would agree that they should light the second candle next to the first so as to fulfill the mehadrin aspect of the mitzvah. Rambam in his responsa¹¹ says that not only would you light the extra candle

for hidur, but you would say a new bracha upon lighting it. This might also be inferred from a statement of Rabbi Chayim Hakohen of Lunil.^{12,13} The hidur mitzvah of Chanukah candles is so integral to the mitzvah that it becomes part and parcel of the mitzvah itself, and therefore a bracha could be recited on its performance even though in other realms that would not be the case.¹⁴

While instinctively we might imagine a divide between the spiritual and the aesthetic, the concept of hidur mitzvah and the extreme case of hidur when it comes to Chanukah indicate otherwise. The very holiday that celebrates the victory over the Hellenist Greeks is permeated with the halachic mandate of aesthetics—so much so that the aesthetic component becomes an intrinsic part of the mitzvah itself more than in any other realm. What are we to make of this odd union?

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, in his essay on aesthetics in Judaism, published posthumously in *Worship of the Heart*,¹⁵ clarifies that spirituality and aesthetics can indeed be at odds with each other but that aesthetics can be redeemed and elevated if utilized in the pursuit of the transcendental. Within a superficial unredeemed aesthetic experience, a person sim-

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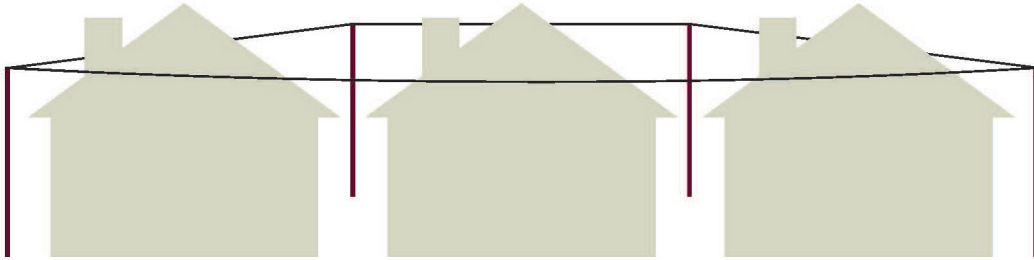
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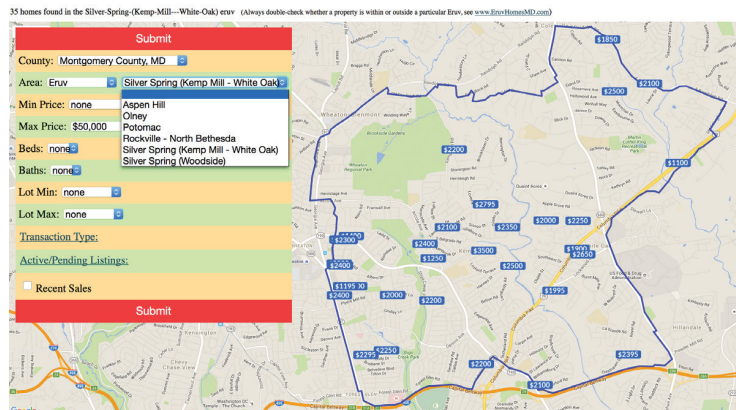


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ply strives for subjective pleasure and immediacy with no loftier aims. In order to elevate the aesthetic, it must be used to direct the eye and heart of humankind away from the self to loftier, more remote, more transcendental goals above our finite existence.

Judaism recognizes the power of the aesthetic and aims to transcendentalize it so that it becomes not an end in and of itself, but a means towards human growth especially in the pursuit of spirituality. In other words, Judaism places value upon the aesthetic because it can help us to achieve transcendence. In fact, we rely on it to help get us there. As Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch says:

The abundance of beauty of every kind which we are given in this, our world, and the fact that—as far as we know—Man is the only creature that has been provided with the ability to enjoy beauty for itself, proves what value the Creator lays on this aesthetic sense for the spiritual-moral calling of Man.¹⁶

This is why God himself is the paradigm of beauty, the epitome of transcendent aesthetics, the perfect union of the spiritual and aesthetic. God is described as:

תהלים פרק קד

ה אלקי גדלת מאד הוד והדר לבשת

Tehillim 104:1

Hashem my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with glory and beauty.

This is why the Beit Hamikdash, the location of the Chanukah miracle and the lighting of the menorah, was a place permeated with the awe and splendor of physical beauty, all meant to direct one's heart to the awe of Hashem.

The hidur of Chanukah marries the spiritual and the aesthetic to the greatest degree, whereby the aesthetic becomes part and parcel of the mitzvah itself. It is the paradigm of how we are capable of elevating the aesthetic to the higher purpose of helping us experience the impact of God. Chanukah's focus on beauty redeems that beauty from the self and utilizes it in the pursuit of spiritual aims—*Pirsum Hanes*, publicization of God's miracles—increasing spiritual awareness and closeness to the Divine. It is a perfect model of beauty used in the way God intended it; of beauty used for loftier purposes. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks once said, "The Greeks believed in the holiness of beauty. Jews believed in the opposite: hadrat kodosh (Ps 29:2) the beauty

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of holiness”;¹⁷ a beauty that can lead us to ever greater spiritual heights on Chanukah and beyond.

The English poet, John Keats, wrote: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”¹⁸ The hidur of Chanukah teaches us to disagree and claim that beauty is *not* truth but a critical component in the search for truth, in the search for the transcendental, in the search for what is beyond our reach. Beauty is what can move us in the most profound way to help transport us towards that which is beyond our reach and beyond our comprehension.

NOTES:

¹O.C. 673:3

²For example, see Mishna Berura 673:3:28 and Beer Heitev 673:3:13

³Commentary of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch on Breishit 9:27.

⁴The word “המהדרין—Hamehadrin” means those who achieve “hadar.” “Hadar” means beauty. As in “pri etz hadar” (Vayikra 23:40) or “hadar hacarmel v’hasharon” (Yishayahu 35:2). This translation of the word “mehadrin” is supported by the interpretation of the Ri quoted in Tosafot Shabbat 21b “vehamehadrin.” They relate this word “mehadrin” to “hidur—beautification.” It is possible that Rashi understood the word differently, as he seems to translate it as “those who pursue” which is derived from translating “hadar” as to return, to come back to, to go after, to pursue.

⁵This explanation of the levels of beauty follows the understanding of the Rambam in Mishneh Torah Hilchot Chanuka 4:1. The Tosafot quote the Ri who had a different understanding of this Gemara. The Ri suggests that above and beyond the basic mitzvah of one candle per household there are two different options which do not build off each other (as opposed to the three-tiered understanding of the Rambam). The first option for beautification above the standard mitzvah is mehadrin which is one candle per person per night. The second option is mehadrin min hamehadrin which is *one* person adding an additional candle per night. What is extremely interesting is when you look at the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema in OC 671:2: the Shulchan Aruch follows the Ri and the Rema follows the Rambam. As the Taz points out in his commentary, this is the opposite of what usually occurs (Shulchan Aruch usually follows the Sefardic tradition of the Rambam and the Rema usually follows the Ashkenazic tradition of the Baalei HaTosafot). Rabbi Soloveitchik actually had a different explanation of this divide: See Harerei Kedem Vol. 1 Siman 162.

⁶It should be noted that a more thorough analysis of “hidur mitzvah” would be necessary in order to properly assess the statement made in this Gemara. One angle that must be explored further is how intrinsic the beautification is to the fulfillment of the mitzvah (this

will be explored more in this essay when it comes to mehadrin in Chanukah). In some of the examples in this Gemara, such as the writing of the Sefer Torah, the beauty is extrinsic. In other cases, most notably the lulav, the hidur seems to be part of the definition of what makes it kosher or not.

⁷Rabbenu Chananel ben Chushiel was an 11th-century Tunisian Rabbi and Talmudist whose commentary can be found on the margins of the standard Vilna Shas.

⁸Masechet Shabbat 21b

⁹Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Halevi Soloveitchik (Gri”z) (1886-1959) lived in Jerusalem and was known as the Brisker Rav. He was the son of Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, the brother of Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik, and the uncle of Rabbi Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik of Yeshiva University. Gri”z fled the Holocaust and arrived in Israel where he established the Brisk yeshiva to carry on the teachings of his father and the methodology of Talmudic learning known as the Brisker Derech.

¹⁰This actually might have deep ramifications, such as which candle you light first each night, the new candle or the old one. This may be the source of the debate on this issue between the Vilna Gaon and the Beit Yosef.

¹¹Rambam Shu”t Pe’er Hador 111 quoted by the Avudraham (R David Avudraham, 14th cent Spain) as quoted by the Machatzit Hashekel (R Shmuel Kolin, 18th century Germany) in his commentary on the Magen Avraham on Shulchan Aruch OC 676:

אם שכן כו'. ועיין מה שכתבתי סוף סימן תרנ”א. ס”ק כ”ה בשם הר”ד אבודרהם [עמוד ר] שכתב בשם הרמב”ם [שו”ת פאר הדור סימן קיא] וז”ל, אם בשעה שהדליק נר ראשון היתה כוונתו להדליק אחרים, אין צריך לברך. ואם בירך והדליק ואחר כך נודמנו לו נרות, מברך בכל פעם, עכ”ל. משמע דאם הדליק תחלה רק נר אחד כי לא היה לו יותר, ולא היה יודע שיביאו לו יותר, ולא נתכוין בברכתו כי אם על נר אחד, לכן כשמביאים לו אח”כ יותר נרות צריך שוב לברך, כיון דלא נתכוין לפטרו בברכה ראשונה אלא שחידוש הוא בעיני, כיון דעיקר המצוה נר איש וביתו, וא”כ כבר קיים המצוה כשהדליק נר ראשון, למה יברך שוב על נרות אחרות דליכא בהו כי אם משום מצות מהדרין:

¹²R. Aharon Hakohen of Lunil, 14th Century France

¹³Orchot Chayim Chanuka 6

¹⁴R. Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (Sfat Emet) (1847–1905) in his commentary on Gemara Shabbat 21b tries to bring proof to this position by showing that this is always the case when multiple people in a home light their own candles as part of the mehadrin min hamehadrin requirement. In that case the added candles above and beyond the first set are all part of hidur and yet the members of the family make a bracha upon them.

¹⁵Toras HoRav Foundation, 2003

¹⁶R. S.R. Hirsch commentary to the Torah Breishit 2:9

¹⁷<http://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-5768-vayakhel-the-beauty-of-holiness-and-the-holiness-of-beauty/>

¹⁸John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”



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Dear Gabbai, continued from page 1

Eastern European communities on one particular day during the year. What day was this (hint: think outside the box about the title), and when in the davening that day was it said (hint: read through the entire zemer)?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S TRIVIA QUESTIONS

1. What is the only date on the Hebrew calendar on which in some years we say Hallel but in other years say Tachanun (hint: it is not related to Yom Ha'atzmaut)? 3rd of Tevet. If Kislev is malei with 30 days (and there are 2 days of Rosh Chodesh) then the last day of Chanukah is the 2nd of Tevet and therefore the 3rd of Tevet is a regular day with Tachanun. If Kislev is chasser with only 29 days (and one day of Rosh Chodesh) the last day of Chanukah would be the 3rd of Tevet and we would say Hallel.
2. What is the extremely rare shmoneh esrei that in the past 200 years occurred only in 1899 and 1994, and will not occur again until 2089 (hint: it's a weekday Amidah, and only occurs outside of Israel)?! The rarest shmoneh esrei outside of Israel would be when Rosh Chodesh Tevet falls on Saturday night/Sunday, but before December 4th. The Saturday night weekday shmoneh esrei would include 1) atta

chonanatanu, 2) ya'aleh v'yavo, 3) al hanisim, and 4) v'ten bracha. Though Rosh Chodesh often falls out like this, it is extremely rare for it to fall this way before December 4th. In Israel, where v'ten bracha changes to v'ten tal on the 17th of Cheshvan (usually November or even late October), this combination within shmoneh esrei would never happen.

3. What is the extremely rare shmoneh esrei that occurs in both Israel and Galut, but has occurred only 23 times in the past 212 years (hint: it is not a weekday Amidah)? Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Tevet in a leap year. In this scenario the Mussaf shmoneh esrei would be 1) atta yatzarta 2) al ha'nisim AND 3) u'l'chaparat pasha for the leap year. This occurs about once every 10 years and actually occurs this year!

As you can probably tell, all three questions were Chanukah related. Happy Chanukah!

To submit a question to "Dear Gabbai" please send an email to ira.rabin@yahoo.com.

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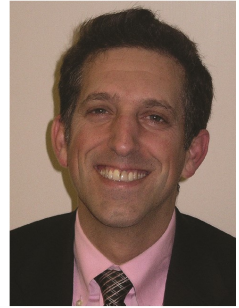
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