

**Epistemology of Tefila(Class 33) - 12/3/2020 — TOPIC: Chanukah - is The Festival of lights, instead of one day of presents we have 8 crazy nights —Part 1**

**Class Strategy**

<b>PRAYERS FOR CHANUKAH</b>		
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1. ***Al HaNissim/For the miracles*** — (RCA Artsroll page 274 - 276, The Koren page 273) This is a declaration of thanks for the miracle of Chanukah which is the main addition to our tfilot/prayers in the Amidah/Standing prayer and Birkat Hamazon/Grace after meals. In the Amidah this prayer is including in the second last section, the Hoda'ah/Thanksgiving section which makes sense and some have the custom to add the prefix Vav/Ve/And to continue from what we have been thankful for in the Modim prayer(RCA page 113). Rav Munk(page 412) says that says its a separate paragraph from Modim so does not need the Ve/And but in Birkat Hamazon it is part of the same paragraph so you should add the Vav. This prayer is structured in two parts the first part is a general introduction which reflects our national gratitude to HaShem for performing miracles for us at key points in our history, enabling us to survive. On Chanukah there was a battle of the Chasmonaim/Hasmoneans against the Greeks, few against many, which resulted in a victory of the weak over the strong, the salvation of the spirit, and the miracle of the burning of the oil(Eliyahu Kitov page 284 - 286). The words that end the first part Baz'man Hazeh/In this time reminds us we are also thanking HaShem for the hidden miracles he preforms everyday even today to preserve life for us and our nation(RCA page 113). When we read the second part for Chanukah only we first get the name of the High Priest at the time and his lineage which make up the Chasmonaim/Hasmoneans/Kohanim HaGadol. Yochanan was the father of Matit'yahu and he in turn was the father of Judah HaMacabee(Eliyahu Kitov Vol I page 257). Then continues to explain how the Greeks knew that the key to the Jewish religion was keeping up with the Torah and tried to get them to neglect Torah study. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains the Greeks concentrated first on getting the Torah forgotten so that then the deterioration of observance would follow(RCA page 114). As mentioned many times before based on the verse in Devarim/Deutoronomy(14:29) "*HaShem will bless you in all that you do*" it is with G-D's help that if we begin a good deed we will be sucessful. This is what Rabbi Twerski(page 460) explains using Perkei Avot/Ethics of Our Fathers (2:21) "*Lo Alecha Ham'lacha Ligmor, V'lo Atah ven Chorin L'hibateil mimenah/You are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it.*" that the first miracle of Chanukah was initiated by the battle of Maccabees and brought to completion by HaShem who stood up an supported them in their trust that G-D would help them and bless them

with success. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch(RCA page 114) says the T'meimim/Impure, R'shaim/Wicked, and Zeidim/Wanton were the Jews who were acting as collaborators to assimilate into the Grecian Culture and push others to do this, hence haShem helped to turn them around. The second part of the miracle Rabbi Twerski(page 461) says is that when the Maccabees only found oil for one day they did not despair but lit the menorah and the single vial miraculously burned for 8 days, again showing how they began the task and HaShem continued it. The concluding words of this part, Rabbi J.B. Soleveitchik(Mesorat Harav Siddur) states show that the victory consisted more of religious freedom than political as demonstrated by the purification of the Temple and the re-kindling of the Eternal light. The oppression of the Syrian Greeks says Rabbi Twerski(page 461) did not threaten our physical survival but our spiritual survival against the paganism of Hellenism. Finally he adds that our prayers on Chanukah should remind us never to despair and rather struggle to maintain our devotion to HaShem even against overwhelming pressures.

2. Brachot on the candles —(RCA Artsroll page 782, The Koren page 897). In shul the candles are lit between Mincha and Ma'ariv but one is still required to light candles at home. We light the candles with a Shamash the reason will be explained when we discuss the tefila "Haneivot halalu". On the first night we place one candle on the right most side and say all three brachot(Rabbi Sacks page 896):
  - (1) ***Lehadlik Ner Shel Chanukah/To Kindle the lights of Chanukah*** —Rav Munk(page 406) says that from Devarim/Deuteronomy (17:10) we learn that a commandment given by our Rabbi's is like a commandment given by HaShem so we say "and commanded us".
  - (2) ***Sheasah Nissim Lavoteinu/Who performed miracles for our forefathers*** —Rav Munk(page 407) points out that many older sources of prayer liturgy ended with Vav/U/And Ubazman hazeh meaning "and in this time" and one should recognize that even now we can see the miracles of HaShem
  - (3) ***Shechianu, v'kiy'manu, v'higianu/Who has kept us alive, preserved us, and enabled us*** — As we explained whenever we do some mitzvah for the first

time we recite the Shechyanu bracha hence only on the first night of Chanukah.

Then on the remainder of the nights only the first two, adding one candle to the left each night and lighting the new candle first continuing towards the right(Rabbi Sacks page 897).

**3. *Haneirot Halalu/These lights*** - (RCA Artscroll page 782, The Koren page 898) This is a hymn about why we light them, the holiness of the lights, and to give praise/thanks to HaShem for what he did for our forefathers and us(Rabbi Sacks page 899). It is sung immediately after one light has been kindled(RCA page 783). Rav Munk(page 408) suggests that if we take introductory words “Haneirot Halalu” and their Hebrew letters Nun-Reish-Vav-Tav and Hay-Lamed-Lamed-Vav we can count 8 Hebrew letters which are an allusion to the 8 festive days of Chanukah. Then we continue listing reasons: miracles or signs, wonders or extraordinary occurrences, salvations or spiritual revival, and battles or victories(RCA page 782). The next section refers to the fact that the candles are holy and we may not use them for light or to light the other candles. This is why the Shamash is used and should be higher than the other candles so as to give the light(Rabbi Sacks page 898). Rabbi Twerski(page 459) explains that we celebrate the miracle of Chanukah in a spiritual way as we were saved from spiritual destruction. He stresses that Chanukah underscores the mission of Judaism to bring the light of HaShem to the world, Or LaGoyim(Yeshayahu/Isaiah 49:6), and these lights of Chanukah represent the triumph of Torah of Hellenism where we are can use the light as a vehicle for a spiritual rather than physical goal. The tefila ends by us stating that our only intent in lighting these candles is to popularize the miracle and to praise Hashem’s greatness. Hence too there is the custom to light the Chanukiah in shul, place the Chanukiah near a window or left side entrance of your main room. Rav Munk(page 409) says that whilst the candles burn one should be involved in celebrating the holiday particularly at that time. One of the hints of what to do come from the Hebrew word for Chanukah(חנוכה) Where Chanu means rested, Caf = 20 + Hey = 5 making a total of 25 so resting on 25 of Kislev. Another word with shoresh/ root from Chanukah is חנך which is also the same for Chinuch which is education and that is why it is common to spend time with ones children playing dreidel and giving Chanukah gelt to educate on the story and the miracle of Chanukah.

One final note before I end off today if you could turn to RCA Artscroll page 270 and The Koren page 265. In the 9th bracha of the Shemoneh Esrei, Birkat Hashanim/Year of prosperity we have a change starting on December 5, in Ma'ariv and then in Shacharit, and Mincha. The words ***Veten B'racha/And give a blessing*** change to the words ***Veten Tal Umatar Livracha/And give dew and rain for a blessing*** until Pesach/Passover.