



In Those Days, In Our Time

A Chanukah Special

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

The phone rang again and again, I was preparing myself to light the Chanukah candles and as I stood and recited a special prayer before the lighting of the Chanukah candles, the phone would not stop. As the ringing persisted, my host answered, someone said they needed to speak with me immediately. I asked him to please call back in a half an hour, but then he broke down on the phone, crying and saying what he had to say could not wait.

This happened about twenty years ago, as I was on a fundraising trip for Migdal Ohr in North America. I left the candle lighting and took the phone. The person on the phone told me he lived nearby, and his plight was that his son had made plans to marry a non-Jewish girl and the wedding was imminent.

"Please help me", he cried, "My parents both endured the hell of Auschwitz. They didn't survive all that so that their grandson could marry a non-Jew." I asked him if his son could come to where I was staying. He agreed. I postponed the candle lighting, waiting for him to arrive.

He arrived with his girlfriend two hours later. I greeted him with warmth, and then immediately returned to the lighting of the candles. I concluded the prayers, reciting them slowly. I offered the man to join me while I lit the candles. He donned a Kipah and recited the blessings with me. We recited the second blessing: "Who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days at this time", I stopped and repeated the words "for our **ancestors**" slowly. The man shuddered a bit and then we lit the candles.

We sang "Maoz Tsur" and had a small Chanukah party, eating *Sufganiyot* and *Latkes*, as his girlfriend looked on, not understanding what was happening. After a half an hour they left, as I wished them a 'Happy Chanukah'.

My host was stunned: "You did not discuss the wedding at all? Why did we wait to light the candles?"

Instead of an answer, I talked about the essence of the candle lighting. There are four differences between the Chanukiyah, the Chanukah candelabra, and the Menorah in the Temple: **1.** The Menorah has seven branches, the Chanukiyah has eight. **2.** The Menorah was placed inside the Temple; we put the Chanukiyah facing toward the public domain. **3.** The Menorah was fully lit every day; the number of candles lit on the Chanukiyah varies each day. **4.** The Menorah was lit during the day, the Chanukiyah at night.

The difference between the two lightings is explained in the following ways:



1. The Menorah has seven branches, denoting to the seven dimensions of nature,¹ and today, when we don't have the Divine presence as we did in the Temple we light eight candles, symbolizing that today we need supernatural resources.

2. The Temple had windows which enabled the light to shine from inside out, and so the light of the Menorah had shown out to the world. This is not the case with the Chanukiyah.

3. In the Temple, where there was a Divine presence, there was no need to add light every day. Jews in exile need to add light, and the additional candle each day symbolizes this.

4. The reality in the Temple was that of day, and so the Menorah was lit during the day. The reality of exile is like the night, and therefore we light the Chanukiyah at night, to shed light in the darkness.

There are four differences, but the lighting of the Chanukah candles is derived from the lighting of the Menorah in the Temple, and as the Menorah signified G-d's divine presence, we are so ensured that the lighting of the candles serves as a catalyst to bring G-d's divine presence among the Jewish

People.

"If the lighting of the candles brings the onset of G-d's divine presence", I concluded, "I am sure his lighting of the candles with me tonight will influence him and bring him to part with his girlfriend."

The next day, again during candle lighting, the phone rang. This time it was the son on the line. He asked to come light the candles with me again, this time without his girlfriend. "I am honored", I replied, and waited for him.

He recited with me the blessings as we did the night before, and when we got to the words "for our **ancestors**" he began to shed tears, "to our ancestors, and I am a Jew too." After the candle lighting we spoke for a long time about the meaning of being Jewish.

The next development was surprising: the father called me, "I don't know what you told my son, he just told me he broke up with his girlfriend, and that he is now looking for a Jewish girl."

He eventually established his Jewish home in Jerusalem, thanks to the Chanukah candles which kindled a new spirit in his heart.

¹ Four sides, above and below (a cube), and the internal seventh dimension that keeps everything together, the G-dly dimension within nature.