

HANNUKAH II

Chanukah Celebration at Kahal

By Joe Samuels

Purim, Passover and Sukkot are all celebrated when the moon is full. Chanukah occurs when the nights are long and daylight is short. It is a festival of lights both physical and spiritual. We celebrate, individually at home and together as a community, by lighting candles for eight days. The candles bring light into our hearts and souls in two ways. Chanukah celebrates the miracle of one vial of oil that lasted eight days, allowing enough time to press new olive oil. It also commemorates the few, ill-equipped Maccabees who defeated a much mightier Greek army.

Kahal Joseph's Chanukah celebration started with the annual Chanukah party for kids held on Sunday December 13th and organized by the Sisterhood. It was attended by numerous young kids and their parents. There were



games, singing, entertainment, and lighting of the candles by Rabbi Hagai Batzri .

On Wednesday, December 16th the Chanukah musical celebration was a time for our community members and guests to enjoy a night to remember. Yuval Ron and his Ensemble took us on a musical trip. I felt that I was on a magical carpet flying from Spain to Morocco then to Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and finally landing in Jerusalem. Those not fluent in Hebrew songs were treated to translations by Yuval, who also was a good story teller. He explained how the Jews of Spain, during the

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Prayer Schedule

EREV SHABBAT, ROSH HODESH, & HANNUKAH

Friday, December 18th

Minhah & Arbit 4:30 pm

Candle Lighting 4:28 pm

Please Light Hannuka candles before Shabbat candles.

Saturday, December 19th

Shaharit 8:30 am

Minhah & Arbit 4:00 pm

Motzei Shabbat 5:32 pm

WEEKDAYS

Sunday, December 20th

Shaharit 7:30 am

Bar Mitzvah Class 8:30 am

Talmud Torah 9:30 am

Mon.-Thurs., Dec. 21-24

Shaharit 6:30 am

EREV SHABBAT PARASHAT VAYIGASH

Friday, December 25th

Minhah & Arbit 4:30 pm

Candle Lighting 4:32 pm

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Inquisition by Queen Isabella some 500 hundred years ago, ended up in Turkey. Rabbi Batzri raised the with his musical talent and powerful voice. The members and guests joined in singing, clapping and dancing in their seats. We were also treated to the guitar music of Gabriela Mahboubi.

During the intermission there were lots of wonderful foods: fresh fruits, cakes, sufganiot (donuts) and zingula - Iraqi sweets- filled the table. Everyone smiled and socialized with friends and acquaint-



ances. After the break Kahal President, Moussa Shaaya, invited Abe Mathalon and his wife, Nicole, to light the Chanukah candles. The celebration ended with singing Yerushlaim shel Zahav, Shabehi Yerushalayim and Hatikvah.

Our Chanukah celebration was a spiritual, uplifting experience we will never forget.



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Nothing could be more important for the modern day Jew. In my many travels I am often surprised at how little so many Jews know about Judaism. Not because Jews are not learned (the majority of Jews I meet have multiple degrees), but because they are ignorant. The sad reality is that many Jews know a lot about science, computers, literature, history, and so many other topics, but very little about Judaism. In a world where knowledge is at our fingertips it is shocking at how little so many Jews know about Judaism. We will flock the movie theatres to watch a trashy Hollywood production, but the Rabbi will barely have a quorum for his weekly class. All of this in times where no one forbids us to study Torah. How ironic that what the Greeks could not accomplish we have managed to do to ourselves. If the Greeks tried to make us "Forget the Torah", then on Hanukah we must do everything to re-dedicate ourselves first and foremost to the study of the Torah. It is for this reason that the word Hanukah also means "to educate". So when you light the Hanukkah lights ask yourselves the following questions, how much do I know about my traditions, do I have basic concepts in Jewish learning, what is it that I can pass on to my children, can I look into the mirror and say I have not forgotten the Torah? The answers to those questions may just be the key to our people's survival.

Wishing you all a Shabbat Shalom & Happy Hanukah



***Happy
Hanukkah!***

In Memoriam

It is customary to light a memorial candle in the evening and donate tzedakah. Family members are encouraged to attend services in honor of their loved ones.

Shabbat / 2 Tevet
David ben Ezra

Sunday / 3 Tevet
Itzhak ben Yaacov
Rahma Victoria bat Khatoon

Monday / 4 Tevet
Simha bat Azizah*

Tuesday / 5 Tevet
Masooda bat Dina
Esther Hamalka bat Rivka
Elisha ben Sassoon Shmuel
Hacham Sassoon

Wednesday / 6 Tevet
Rahel bat Clare Levy
Salem Kooby
Manuel ben Yosef

Thursday / 7 Tevet
Eliezer ben David Halevi*

Friday / 8 Tevet
Abraham Khazzoom
Eliyahu Hayim ben Shlomo
Halevi
Mordechai ben Rafael Natan
David Sasson ben Shlomo
Reuven*

Shabbat / 9 Tevet
Yehezkel ben Yaacov Azoori

Yahrzeit names with asterisks are missing contact phone numbers and addresses for family members. To update the database, please call the office at 310.474.0559.

Community News

SHABBAT

KIDDUSH

is sponsored by

Sabah & Gitty Sawdayi

in memory of their mother

Violet Esther bat Tifaha, z"l

Refuah Shlemah

Please include these individuals in your prayers for healing:

Yonatan ben Alizah ▪ Mazal Tov bat Sulha Mitana ▪ Matilda Louisa ▪ Jack Wickett ▪ Yaheskel ben Regina ▪ Ayala bat Naomi ▪ Khayah Noa bat Sara ▪ Victor ben Pauline ▪ Haim ben Mordechai ▪ Moshe ben Naji ▪ Pnina bat Esther ▪ Yosi ben Esther ▪ Victor ben Latif ▪ Ramah Regina bat Farha ▪ Aziza bat Sara

Announcements

Spice Club for Haftara Readers

Wouldn't you like to chant from the Torah? Reserve your haftara portion at 310.474.0559. Schedule time with Saeed & learn your haftara with authentic Baghdadi ta'amim, Iraqi melodies for Torah reading.

THANK YOU TO OUR SISTERHOOD

FOR ORGANIZING
A FABULOUS
CHILDREN'S
HANNUKA
CELEBRATION
YET AGAIN!

Send Us Your Ideas

For the betterment of our service to the community at Kahal Joseph, please forward your comments and suggestions to:

president@kahal.org

MITZVOT ON SHABBAT

We now offer for donation the following Mitzvot on Shabbat:

1. *Petichat Hechal* The opening of the ark where the Torahs are kept.
2. *Carrying of the Sefer Torah and Sefer Haftara*
3. *Hakamat Sefer* The lifting and showing of the Torah.
4. *Mashlim** The seventh aliya to the Torah who recites Kaddish
5. *Maftir** The last aliya to the Torah which includes the reading of the Haftara (which will be read by one of the clergy unless member reading has been previously approved)

Since we count on your donations to the synagogue to keep our membership fees as low as they are, we suggest a minimum donation for all those who are called to the Torah of \$101 or multiples of \$18 or \$26. We appreciate your support.

*Paid members may call the office to book the Mashlim or Maftir in advance, in memory of a departed relative. You will receive confirmation before Shabbat if you will receive the aliya or if there is a conflict. The member may also reserve any other aliya in advance by calling the office.

For the Sake of Study

Rabbi Yosef Benarroch

From a young age we were all taught that Hanukah is a celebration of the great miracle of the oil. The Talmud (Shabbat 21b) records that when the Hashmonaim defeated the Greeks and entered into the Temple they found but one small jar of olive oil that was not defiled. Miraculously the jar that had only enough oil to last for one day lasted for eight days and as a result we celebrate Hanukah every year, lighting candles for eight days.

But unlike other holidays our sources are not in unanimous agreement that this is the sole reason for Hanukah. The Book of Hashmonaim, for example, has an altogether different reason for the eight days of Hanukah. In chapter four, after the Jewish defeat of the Greek armies, we are told the following, "And there was great joy throughout the nation for G-d had removed the shame of the nations from them. And Yehuda (The Macabi) and his brothers and all the congregation of Israel celebrated the rededication of the Alter (Mizbeah) every year on the twenty fifth day of the month of Kislev for eight days with songs of praise and thanksgiving" (Book of the Hashmonaim 4:56-57).

As you can see a second reason is given why we celebrate Hanukah. It has nothing to do with the miracle of the oil, but with the rededication of the Temple altar where sacrifices were burnt. I am not suggesting that one reason takes precedence over the other. The miracle of the oil is significant and part of our tradition. Today I would like to explore the significance of the second reason, the rededication of the "Alter". What can we learn from it?

As we read the Hanukah liturgy one thing becomes clear. The primary goal of the Greeks was to assimilate the Jewish nation into their culture. What was their method? How did they hope to attain that goal?

Our prayers make the answer abundantly clear. In the "Al Hanisim" prayer that is inserted into the daily "Amidah", we say the following, "In the days of Matityahu son of Yohanan and his sons the high priests the evil Syrian Greeks rose to power and forced the people of Israel to forget your Torah" (From our daily prayer book). The Greeks knew that to destroy the Jewish people it could only be made possible by destroying their life source, the Torah. By not allowing the Jewish people to study their sacred text it would eventually lead to assimilation and with time the Jewish people would cease to exist.

This is also made clear in Maimonides code. At the outset of the Laws of Hanukah he states the following, "During the Second Temple period when the Syrian Greeks ruled (over Israel) they enacted many decrees on the nation of Israel annulling their religious ways by not allowing them to be involved in the study of Torah" (Maimonides Laws of Hanukah 3:1). By forbidding the study of the Torah, the Greeks knew that it would lead to the extinguishing of the Jewish nation. An ignorant nation is a vulnerable nation.

It is for this reason that throughout the ages Jews have sacrificed their lives in order to make sure that the flames of Torah study would never be extinguished. One powerful story in this regard is a famous tale of Rabbi Akiva.

The Talmud (Berahot 61b) relates the following story, "Once it happened that the (Roman) authorities decreed that it was forbidden to study the Torah. Papos the son of Yehuda chanced to find Rabbi Akiva who was teaching the Torah (in secret) to a large group. He said to him 'Akiva do you not fear the authorities?' He responded with a parable saying, 'This can be compared to a fox that was walking by the river bank and saw fish racing in every direction. He asked them why they were afraid and they responded that they were running from the nets of the fisherman. The fox answered, 'why do you not come up to the dry land with me and I will protect you'. They responded 'you are nothing but a fool for if in the water that is our source of life we are in danger then if we leave the water how much more will we be in danger'. So too Rabbi Akiva turned to Papos and said, 'if when we are involved in the study of Torah about which it is said 'for it is your life and the ways of your life' we are in danger then how much more so if we cease to study our Torah will we be in danger" (Talmud Berahot 61b). The story concludes that both Rabbi Akiva and Papos were eventually imprisoned by the Romans and met a cruel death. When Papos met Rabbi Akiva in prison he proclaimed the following, "Happy are you Rabbi Akiva that you were caught over the study of the Torah, woe to me Papos for I have been caught over trivial matters" (Ibid). Rabbi Akiva could not fathom the thought of the Jewish people not studying the Torah. Like water for fish it is our life source.

It is this message that is so vital to the holiday of Hanukah. The lighting of the candles is not only an act that commemorates a miracle that happened many years ago, but an act that proclaims that the light of the Jewish people burns bright and strong. When we light we are remembering the evil decrees of the Greeks, and in a powerful way acknowledging that through our dedication first and foremost to the Torah and its study the Greeks were not able to extinguish the Jewish spirit and the survival of our people.

Perhaps this better explains the two reasons of why we celebrate Hanukah. Both reasons (The oil that burns for eight days and the rededication of the Alter) have to do with fire. But they are fires of a different nature. The fire of the olive oil, used to light the Menorah, is a constant flame that is gentle and glowing, while the flames of the Alter are consuming fires. The fire of the Alter teaches us about sacrifice. It teaches us that sometimes Jews have to have a consuming passion to fight for their survival. It teaches us that like the fires of the Alter we must passionately study the Torah even when it means great sacrifice. The flames of the Menorah teach us that ultimately the sacrifices will bear fruit. Like the fire of the Menorah is constant so will the survival of the Jewish people be constant.

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