



BNEI AKIVA
OF THE UNITED STATES & CANADA

CHANUKAH CHOVERET



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- 8 Short Vorts
- Make Your Own Shamash
- Light Projection Project
- Follow the 8s and Find the Oil Scavenger Hunt
- Recipes
- Bonus: Grand/Parent-Child Learning

8 SHORT VORTS

1. The Greeks didn't believe in Kedusha

משנה מסכת מידות - פרק ב'; משנה ג'

Context: This Mishna talks about the various different components of the Beit Hamikdash and their measurements.

There were thirteen breaches in it [the Soreg, which was a small wall surrounding the Temple], which had been originally made by the kings of Greece, and when they repaired them they enacted that thirteen bows

וְשָׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה פְּרָצוֹת הָיוּ. שָׁם, נִשְׁפָּרְצוּם
מֶלְכֵי יוֹן. חָזְרוּ וּגְדְּרוּם, וְגִזְרוּ כְּנִגְדָם
שָׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה הִשְׁתַּחֲוִיּוֹת.

When the Greeks came and conquered Yerushalayim, they didn't destroy the Beit Hamikdash. They just made some renovations. Greek temples are built open for all to see and access, and they wished to turn our Beit Hamikdash into a Greek temple. The Greek temples reflect their society - everything open and accessible to everyone. In Judaism we think otherwise, as one of the principles in Judaism is sanctity, or Kedusha. Kedusha means separation. When we make Kiddush on Shabbat, we separate (and thus elevate) Shabbat from the rest of the week. When a man is Mekadesh a woman for marriage, she is separated from everyone else, and designated especially to the Chatan. The Beit Hamikdash was separated from those who were not designated to serve in it. It is our value of sanctity that keeps our families, communities, culture and religion strong, and also what helped us not only survive the Greeks, but helped us continue to outlast them today.

• *Where do we see this meaning of kedusha in our daily lives?*

2. The true secret of our victory

The Rambam teaches us a very interesting and important lesson regarding Chanukah candles. The mitzvah of Chanukah candles is so important, that if one does not have any money to purchase candles, he must sell something to buy the candles.

However, what if he has only one candle and he is not sure if he should use it for Shabbat or Chanukah? We might think for Chanukah, because Shabbat candles don't have the rule that we mentioned earlier. But the Answer is Shabbat! Why?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (זצ"ל) explains that despite this law, the reason why one would need to use it for Shabbat is because of the reason we light - for Shalom Bayit. While commemorating the miracles of the oil and the battle are very important, the reason we were able to outlast the Greeks, and all those who came and ruled over us and our land militarily, is because of our Shalom Bayit, and the strength of our home. While they preferred military might, we preferred our home, education, and our children. Rabbi Sacks: "As we celebrate Chanukah, spare a thought for the real victory,



which was not military but spiritual.”

3. Going out and going in

שבת כ"ב;א'

The Halacha is the left side, so that the Chanukah candles will be on the left, and the Mezuza on the right.

וְהִלְכְתָּא מִשְׁמָאל, כְּדִי שְׂתֵּהָא בֵּר חֲנוּכָּה
מִשְׁמָאל וּמְזוּזָה מִיְמִין.

The Gemara brings Rav Shmuel of Difti's opinion that the Chanukah should be placed on the left side of the doorway as Halacha. There are a couple more acceptable options of where to put the chanukah, but first let's ask why davka on the left? The Gemara doesn't give an answer to this question.

Rav Zelig Bernstein suggests an explanation that we would find consistent with all other alternative options of where to place the Chanukah. The common denominator of all options is Pirsumei Nisa. At the end of that day, it's all about putting it where most people will see it. So why the left side?

The right side of the doorway has the Mezuza, which protects the house and everything inside. But on Chanukah our job is not to look on the inside of our house, rather to look the other direction - to stand inside the house and look outwards; to spread the Chanukah miracle to everyone around us. And as we do that, the Chanukah is actually on our right side.



We see here that these two mitzvot that we put in our doorway each have their own direction, based on the purpose or essence of that mitzvah.

- Trivia question: *What other Mitzvot do you know of that also take place at the doorway?*
 - (Some suggested answers: Blood of the Pesach Korban, Hachnasat Orchim, Escorting guest out)

4. Story - Coming down to meet us

On the first night of Chanukah, Reb David Metolna stood next to his beautiful gold Chanukah, and was getting ready to light the candle. Suddenly, he turned to the Chasid next to him, and asked, "Tell me - your wife is short, right? When you want to speak with her, do you bend down or does she step up?"

Without waiting for an answer, the Rebbe made the Brachot and lit the Chanukah candle. The chasidim around him were shocked and confused by the Rebbe's actions. Upon witnessing the shock and confusion, another Chasid, Reb Mordechai Dov Hornistaple, explained the Rebbe's strange behavior to everyone.

"The Gemara teaches us that the Schina (Divine Presence) of Hashem never goes below 10 tfachim (handbreadths). That being so, there is a special idea on Chanukah to light the Chanukah below 10 tefachim, to teach us that Hashem is bending down



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to us on this Chag, so we can be closer to him.”

On chanukah, we have the special opportunity to see Hashem’s light also in the “lower areas” where it is not usually found.

Where might be a place (not necessarily physical) where we don’t usually see Hashem’s light? How can we find the light there now?

5. Why not just use impure oil?

Why did we need the Miracle of the oil to last 8 days? Why couldn’t the Jews have used an unsealed jar of oil for the sake of being able to light the menorah? Rabbi Shalom Rosner of Nofei HaShemesh in Israel explains based on the Pnei Yehoshua that Hashem gave us this neis so we could feel a ‘Divine kiss,’ and receive recognition from Hashem that He loves us. Chanukah falls out during the darkest part of the year. The days are short and nights are long. We have the light of the candles to physically light up the dark times of the year, along with the challenging times of galut. Nowadays, we need to look harder to see the Divine kisses we receive from Hashem. Klal Yisrael at the time of the Chanukah story was on a higher level and therefore were able to be the recipients of Hashem performing this neis galuy--apparent miracle, for them. May we use the messages of Chanukah and the light we receive, as reminders and encouragement to see Hashem giving us Divine signs of love in our daily life.

6. The Flame Doesn’t Diminish

There is an interesting question asked in the Gemara - Are you allowed to take a Chanukah candle to light another Chanukah candle? What do you think? Rav and Shmuel debate this question, and usually when Rav and Shmuel disagree, we follow Rav’s opinion, except for a few exceptions. This is one of the exceptions. Rav says no, because by doing so, you are diminishing of the original light, as there is no way that some extra oil won’t be burned, or spilled in the process. Shmuel, on the other hand, says it is allowed. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks explains that Shmuel holds that it doesn’t diminish the first candle, but rather the opposite! It’s flame “grows” and is even bigger because it lit the other candle. Rabbi Sacks continues to explain that there are those who may think that sharing their light with others who are less fortunate may diminish from their own growth. But when we share our knowledge, faith, or love with others, ours won’t diminish, and may even grow greater. One who is knowledgeable in Torah doesn’t diminish his knowledge by teaching others, but rather his Torah knowledge grows.

- *What can we do to make our light greater this Chag?*



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7. Maoz Tzur Trivia

Many families only sing and are only aware the first verse of this beautiful song. Let's see if you can understand the clues from the composer to answer these questions! (answers after the song)

- How were we saved after 70 years?
- Who was Agag, and who is his descendant, the "Agagite" referred to in the 3 stanza? And who is the Benjaminite?
- Why are Bnei Yisrael referred to as roses?
- Who are the 7 shepherds?

<p>My soul had been sated with troubles, my strength has been consumed with grief. They had embittered my life with hardship, with the calf-like kingdom's bondage. But with His great power He brought forth the treasured ones, Pharaoh's army and all his offspring Went down like a stone into the deep.</p>	<p>רעות שבעה נפשי בִּגְיוֹן כְּחִי כָלָה חַיִּי מָרָרוּ בְּקוֹשִׁי בְּשַׁעְבּוֹד מַלְכוּת עֶגְלָה וּבִידּוֹ הַגְדוּלָה הוֹצִיא אֶת הַסֶּגְלָה חֵיל פָּרְעֹה וְכָל זָרְעוֹ יָרְדוּ כְּאֶבֶן בַּמַּצּוּלָה:</p>
<p>To the Holy sanctuary He brought me. But there, too, I had no rest And an oppressor came and exiled me. For I had served other gods, And had drunk benumbing wine. I had almost ceased to exist At Babylon's end Zerubabel came. At the end of seventy years I was saved.</p>	<p>דְּבִיר קֹדֶשׁוֹ הֵבִיאֵנִי וְגַם שָׁם לֹא שָׁקֵטִי וְכֹא נֹגֵשׁ וְהַגְלִי כִּי זָרִים עֲבַדְתִּי וַיֵּין רַעַל מִסְכָּתִי כִּמְעֹט שְׁעַבְרָתִי קֹץ בָּבֶל זָרְבָבֶל לָקֹץ שְׂבָעִים נוֹשַׁעְתִּי:</p>
<p>To sever the towering cypress sought the Agagite, son of Ham-medatha, But it became [a snare and] a stumbling block to him and his arrogance was stilled. The head of the Benjaminite You lifted and the enemy, his name You obliterated His numerous children and his possessions – on the gallows You hanged.</p>	<p>כָּרוֹת קוֹמַת בְּרוֹשׁ בִּקֵּשׁ אֲגָגִי בֶן הַמֵּדָתָא וְנִהְיָתָה לוֹ לִפְחַ וּלְמוֹקֵשׁ וְגִאֲוָתוֹ נִשְׁבָּתָה רֹאשׁ יְמִינִי נִשְׁאַתָּ וְאוֹיֵב שְׁמוֹ מְחִיתָ רַב בְּנָיו וְקִנְיָנוֹ עַל הָעֵץ תִּלִּית:</p>
<p>Greeks gathered against me then in Hasmonean days. They breached the walls of my towers and they defiled all the oils; And from the one remnant of the jars, a miracle was made for the roses. The sages – eight days they established for song and jubilation</p>	<p>יֻנְּיָם נִקְבְּצוּ עָלַי אֲזִי בִימֵי חֲשֹׁמֵינִים וּפָרְצוּ חוֹמוֹת מִגְדְּלִי וְטָמְאוּ כָּל הַשִּׁמְנִים וּמִנוֹתֵר קִנְקֵינִים נַעֲשָׂה נֵס לְשׁוֹשָׁנִים בְּנֵי בֵּיתָה יְמֵי שְׁמוֹנָה קָבְעוּ שִׁיר וְרִנָּיִם:</p>
<p>Show Your holy arm and hasten the End for salvation – Avenge the vengeance of Your servants' blood from the wicked nation. For the triumph is too long delayed for us, and there is no end to days of evil, Repel the Edom in the nethermost shadow and establish for us the seven shepherds.</p>	<p>חֲשׂוֹף זְרוּעַ קֹדֶשְׁךָ [2] וְקָרַב קֹץ הַיְשׁוּעָה נִקְּם נִקְמַת עֲבָדֶיךָ מֵאֲמַת הָרָשָׁעָה כִּי אַרְכָּה הַשָּׁעָה וְאֵין קֹץ לִימֵי הָרָעָה דַּחַח אֲדָמוֹן בְּצֶל צֶלְמוֹן הִקָּם לָנוּ רוּעִים שְׂבָעָה:</p>



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Answers:

- The beit hamikdash was rebuilt by Ezra, Zerubavel, and Yehoshua the Kohen Gadol 70 years after the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash, fulfilling Yirmiyahu's prophecy
- Agag was the Amalekite king that Shaul was supposed to kill, but didn't. His descendant was Haman. And the Benjaminite is Mordechai (and Ester for that matter)
- Roses are used throughout Shir Hashirim as a reference to Am Yisrael. Specifically based on the pasuk, Like a Rose amongst the thorns, my beloved is amongst the women. Rashi explains that despite being surrounded by thorns (Avoda Zara) and tempted to follow it, the rose stand bold and upright, true to their belief
- 7 shepherds are a reference to a pasuk in Micha, which is explained as the 7 leaders that we will have that will bring us to the Geula, or in their merit we will have the Geula. The Gemara in Masechet Sukka teaches us that these 7 are David Hamelech in the middle; to his right are Adam Seth and Metushelach, and to his left are Avraham Yaakov and Moshe

8. Why 8 days?

The Chashmonaim came to the Beit Hamikdash, and found only enough oil to burn for one day. Then Hashem made a miracle, and the oil burned for 8 days. If this is the case, then why do we celebrate 8 days? Meaning, there was enough oil for one day, the miracle was really only for the 7 days! So why do we say 8?

The Beit Yosef gives 3 possible explanations:

- The amount of oil burned each day was miraculously little, so therefore there was a miracle each day
- After they filled the Menorah with the oil, the jar of oil remained full, and therefore there was a miracle each day
- After they poured the oil into the Menorah, the next morning they saw that the Menorah was still full

The Pri Chadash offers a different explanation, that miracle was in fact 7 days, but we added one more day because of the battle victory

Others suggest that the finding of the pure oil jar was also a miracle, and therefore added one day to the 7 of the candles.

There was a book compiled of 250 answers to this question! Can you think of any other reasons for it to be 8 days?



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PROJECTS

Egg-shaped candle-making project

This fun and simple candle making project is a great way to learn about candle making and at the same time recycle some of your old used crayons. Whether you use it as a shamash, a candle to light all the shamashes with or just a regular decorative candle, your kids will have fun.

Getting ready!

- Cover work space with old newspapers
- Gather used and broken crayons, tea lights, baking paper, eggs and string. You could also buy candle wax on amazon instead of tealights.
- Set aside a pan with water, and an empty food can.

Let's go!

- Break the tealights to remove the foil and wick. Place in the tin can along with colored crayons as desired. A different color should be made in a different can.
- Bend the can at the top to create a spout. This will help pour later.
- While the wax is melting, poke small holes in each end of the egg to take out the yolk and white. Set aside so you can use them for one of our recipes ;).
- Bottom hole should be no bigger than a grain of barley; top hole no bigger than a dime
- Thread the string through the egg shell holes
- Once the wax is melted pour a tiny amount on a baking sheet and place the egg on it, small hole down, so it will cover the hole.
- Pour the wax into the eggshell and wait until it cools and hardens
- Feel free to layer colors, just make sure to wait until the previous layer hardens
- Remove the shell and cut off the bottom of the string. Viola!

Light projector

Chanukah is the festival of light, and so our chag would not be complete without a light project to brighten up our chag. What we are going to do is create a star-light projector using the following materials:

- A large mason jar
- Cereal box cardboard or similar
- Aluminum foil



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- Scissors, toothpicks, tacks, anything that will poke holes
- A small LED push-light (available at many dollar store and Amazon - just make sure theyll fit into the jar)
- Batteries for the light
- Cut out cardboard so that it will completely cover the inside circumference of the mason jar
- Cut out a sheet of tin foil just about the same size as the cardboard (ever so slightly smaller)
- Glue or staple the aluminum foil to the cardboard
- Puncture holes throughout the cardboard and slip the cardboard into the jar, aluminum foil on the inside.
- Click the light and slip it in to the center of the jar, facing up.
- Close the lid, turn off the lights, and if you have something that could spin it around, put on some music and have a family disco party!

Please note: It is not recommended to leave lights on in small enclosed spaces for extended periods of time. Please be careful.



TRIVIA SCAVENGER HUNT

Chanukah Sameach! This Chanukah we're taking you back all the way to the time of the Maccabees, just as they were scouring the Beit Hamikdash for pure oil. Miraculously, that oil ended up lasting for 8 days, which is also the amount of time it takes to make more oil. The number 8 has a lot of significance in Judaism, and we're going to help them search for the missing oil by following the 8's!

Prep instructions:

Cut out each individual section. Save the first clue to give to the participants when the hunt begins. The title of each section is where the clue needs to be placed. The clue shouldn't be hidden out in the open, but shouldn't be too hard to find.

At the last location, if desired, you could also hide their Chanukah candles so they will feel as if they're actually finding the oil for the Menora. Use those candles for the Chanukah.

Every Jewish baby boy starts their life with this 8. Now follow these clues to lead you to the next:

- What happens on the 8th day of a baby boy's life?
- Take the first word, and think about what might rhyme with it, and has something in common with the mandolin:



Once you figure it out, go find it for your next clue!

Tzitzit:

Starting with the same letter, you give me to others to make things better.
It matters less how much you give, but more to give everyday that you live.
I am not just here or there, I can be found everywhere,
In a house or in a school, next to a cashier or in a shul.

Tzedaka Box:

According to the Rambam, there are 8 different levels of Tzedaka. The highest is giving someone a job so that they may earn money for themselves so that they no longer need tzedaka, and the lowest level is to give unwillingly.
The 8th level is also known as being "above nature", supernatural and unbelievable.
We have only one other chag that is 8 days (or really 7+1).
Go find your next clue there!



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Shmini Atzeret Section the Machzor:

Sukkot and Shmini Atzeret according to Chasidut are like two parts to a wedding ceremony - Sukkot is the Chupa (It looks like one too!) when we enjoy with all our guests (Sukkot is celebrated in the Beit Hamikdash with all other nations, through their korbanot - 70 for the 70 nations of the world). Shmini Atzeret is the Yichud room - after the chupa when the Chatan and Kala are alone with each other, and that is when we are with Hashem alone.

But speaking of married couples, there is one cave that holds our next 8. 4 couples are buried there. The first couple guilty of eating one of these...

The Fruit drawer/bowl:

Just for starters, Adam and Chava didn't eat an apple. Apple isn't mentioned in the Torah.

Many suggestions are given as to what it was: grapes, figs, garlic, even wheat. But no apples.

But if we continue with our story, the next generation, Kayin and Hevel brought the first korban. It took a while before we had a set place to give korbanot, but while in the desert, after 7 days of preparation, Hashem's presence entered this place on the 8th day....

ר	ת	ק	ה	נ	כ	י	ש	מ	ב
r	t	a	p	b	l	m	e	o	f

Under the Table:

תלמוד בבלי: מנחות צ"ז,א'

Rabbi Yochanan and R' Elazar both say, When the Beit Hamikdash was built, the Mizbeach would atone for man. Now that it is no longer, man's table atones for him	ר' יוחנן ור' אלעזר דאמרי תרוייהו בזמן שבית המקדש קיים מזבח מכפר על אדם ועכשיו שאין בית המקדש קיים שולחנו של אדם מכפר עליו:
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Now that there is no Beit Hamikdash, and no mizbeach to help us achieve forgiveness for our sins, now our table fills that void, and helps us. How do you think it helps us achieve forgiveness? How can we serve Hashem at our table?

What do you think in our house replaces the Menorah?

Chag Sameach!



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RECIPES

Moroccan Sfinge

Yield: 30

- 8 cups of flour
- 4 Tbsp yeast
- ½ cup sugar
- 3 ⅓ cups water
- Oil for frying
- Sugar for coating



1. In a big bowl mix the flour and yeast, then mix in the sugar and the salt
2. Pour in half of the amount of water and knead, while adding the rest a little more at a time.
3. Do not knead too much. The dough is meant to be “wet” and sticky.
4. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise until it doubles in size (about 30 min)
5. With wet hands (so the dough doesn’t stick) punch down the dough and give a slight knead, and let rise again until it doubles
6. With wet or oiled hands, create donut-shaped pieces of dough (can cut out circles and then make a hole, or just pinch the dough off and make a hole. Or just not make a hole at all.) and place them carefully in the oil
7. Fry for 2-3 minutes on each side. Let cool and dip in sugar for coating

B’tayavon!



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Apple Latkes

Looking for something interesting to give your Chanuka a twist? Try these Sweet Apple Latkes from famous Israel conditor Karin Goren!

Yield: 6

- 1 Large egg
- 1 small cup of yogurt (or make it Chanukah themes and do $\frac{1}{2}$ a *Greek* yogurt cup)
- 2 Tbsp sugar
- 1 Tsp Cinnamon
- 2 Large Granny Smith apples
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup self-rising flour (can be replaced with flour, baking powder and salt. 1.5 tsp BP and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp Salt for every cup of regular flour)



1. Grate the peeled apples using a food processor or grater
2. Combine the egg, yogurt, sugar and cinnamon in a bowl, and then add the flour and mix until well combined.
3. Medium-fry (as opposed to deep fry) in a pan a couple minutes on each side until it browns, and remove to a paper towel lined plate.
4. Serve with powdered sugar or syrup and enjoy!



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— 8 DAYS OF — BANAKKAH

Follow Bnei Akiva of the US & Canada on instagram and facebook for contests and prizes on Motsei Shabbat!

PARENT-CHILD LEARNING

By Rav Shaul Feldman

The Laws & Light of Channukah

The **Mishneh Torah** (Hebrew: מִשְׁנֵה תּוֹרָה, “Repetition of the Torah”), subtitled **Sefer Yad ha-Hazaka** (ספר יד החזקה “Book of the Strong Hand”), is a code of Jewish religious law (Halakha) authored by Maimonides/Rambam (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon). The *Mishneh Torah* was compiled between 1170 and 1180 CE (4930 and 4940 AM), while the Rambam was living in Egypt, and is regarded as Maimonides’ magnum opus. Accordingly, later sources simply refer to the work as “*Maimon*”, “*Maimonides*”, or “*RaM-BaM*”, although Maimonides composed other works.

Maimonides intended to provide a complete statement of the Oral Law, so that a person who mastered first the Written Torah and then the *Mishneh Torah* would be in no need of any other book.

As you saw in this small biography of the Rambam, he wrote a book of laws. The Rambam combined the laws of Purim and Channukah together naming it **Scroll of Esther and Channukah**.

Q: Can you think of why the Rambam put them together in one book?

1) Let us learn the beginning of the laws of Purim:

קריאת המגלה בזמנה מצות עשה מדברי סופרים. והדברים ידועים שהיא תקנת הנביאים. והכל חייבים בקריאתה אנשים ונשים וגרים ועבדים משחררים. ומחנכין את הקטנים לקרותה. ואפלו כהנים בעבודתן מבטלין עבודתן ובאין לשמע מקרא מגלה. וכן מבטלים תלמוד תורה לשמע מקרא מגלה קל וחמר לשאר מצות של תורה שכלן נדחין מפני מקרא מגלה. ואין לה דבר שנדחה מקרא מגלה מפניו חוץ ממת מצוה שאין לו קוברין שהפוגע בו קוברו תחלה ואחר כך קורא:



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We are bidden by the sages to read the Megillah at its proper time. It is widely known that this reading was prescribed by the prophets. Everyone is required to hear its reading: men, women, proselytes, and emancipated slaves. Minors should be trained to read it. Even priests amidst their service stop their service and come to hear the reading of the Scroll. We can learn from this that just as we stop Torah study to hear the reading of the Scroll — all the more so for the other commandments of the Torah. All of them are overridden on account of the reading of the Scroll. There is nothing that overrides the reading of the Scroll, [to go] before it, except for a commanded corpse — [meaning one] that has no one to bury it. For one who encounters it must bury it first; and read [the Scroll] afterwards.

This is a classic way for the Rambam to write. It is a “law” of how to fulfill one of the Mitzvot of Purim!

Q: Can you think of a reason why the Rambam started the laws of Purim with the Mitzvah of Megilah?

2) Let's jump to the third chapter where the Rambam starts the Laws of “Channukah”:

בְּבֵית שְׁנֵי כְּשִׁמְלֵי יוֹן גָּזְרוּ גְזֵרוֹת עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִטְלוּ דָתָם וְלֹא הֵנִיחוּ אוֹתָם לַעֲסֹק בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוֹת.
וּפָשְׁטוּ יָדָם בְּמִמּוֹנָם וּבְבָנוֹתֵיהֶם וְנָכְסוּ לַהֲיָכָל וּפָרְצוּ בוֹ פְּרָצוֹת וְטָמְאוּ הַטְּהָרוֹת. וְצָר לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל
מְאֹד מִפְּנֵיהֶם וּלְחֹץ גָּדוֹל עַד שֶׁרָחַם עֲלֵיהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְהוֹשִׁיעָם מִיָּדָם וְהִצִּילָם וּגְבָרוּ בְּנֵי
חֲשִׁמוֹנָי הַכֹּהֲנִים הַגְּדוֹלִים וְהָרְגוּם וְהוֹשִׁיעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיָּדָם וְהַעֲמִידוּ מֶלֶךְ מִן הַכֹּהֲנִים וְחִזְרָה מַלְכוּת
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵתֵר עַל מְאֵתָיִם שָׁנָה עַד הַחֲרָבָן הַשֵּׁנִי:

During the period of the second Temple, when the Greek kings were in power, they proclaimed decrees against the Jewish people, abrogating their religion and forbidding them to study the Torah or to perform the divine precepts. They laid their hands on their wealth and their daughters; they entered the Temple and broke through it, defiling the things that were pure. The people of Israel were sorely distressed by their enemies, who oppressed them ruthlessly until the God of our fathers took pity, saved and rescued them from the hands of the tyrants. The Hasmonean great priests won victories, defeating the Syrian Greeks and saving Israel from their power. They set up a king from among the priests and Israel's kingdom was restored for a period of more than two centuries, until the destruction of the second Temple.

וּכְשֶׁגָּבְרוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל אוֹיְבֵיהֶם וְאֶבְדוּם בְּכִיָּה בַּחֲדָשׁ כִּסְלֹו הָיָה וְנָכְסוּ לַהֲיָכָל וְלֹא מָצְאוּ שָׁמֶן טָהוֹר
בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲלָא פָּךְ אֶחָד וְלֹא הָיָה בוֹ לְהַדְלִיק אֲלָא יוֹם אֶחָד בְּלִבָּד וְהַדְלִיקוּ מִמֶּנּוּ נֵרוֹת הַמַּעֲרֵכָה
שְׁמוֹנָה יָמִים עַד שֶׁכָּתְשׁוּ זֵיתִים וְהוֹצִיאוּ שָׁמֶן טָהוֹר:

When, on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the Jews had emerged victorious over their foes and destroyed them, they re-entered the Temple where they found only one jar of pure oil, enough to be lit for only a single day; yet they used it for lighting the required set of lamps for eight days, until they managed to press olives and produce pure oil.



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This is very strange. The Rambam does not describe any “Halacha;” instead, he is teaching us the story of “Channukah.” This is not how the Rambam begins any other subject, as we saw in the laws of Purim.

Perhaps the Rambam did not see a need to tell the story of Purim as he could just send us to read the Megila, which could explain why he made it the first Halacha. However, the Rambam could have also referred us to the story in the Gemara (Masachet Shabbat) about Channukah. Why then would the Rambam tell the story here and not just cite the source in the Gemara? Clearly the Rambam has a point/message in doing so.

Q: What do you think his reasons are?

3) Read this Stunning outcome of the family of Chashmonaim!

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף מט עמוד ב
ושלא ילמד את בנו יוונית. ת"ר: כשצרו מלכי בית חשמונאי זה על זה, היה הורקנוס מבחוץ ואריסטובולוס מבפנים. בכל יום ויום היו משלשלין דינרים בקופה ומעלין להן תמידים. היה שם זקן אחד שהיה מכיר בחכמת יוונית, לעז להם בחכמת יוונית, אמר להן: כל זמן שעוסקים בעבודה אין נמסרין בידכם. למחר שלשלו להם דינרים בקופה והעלו להם חזיר, כיון שהגיע לחצי חומה, נעץ צפרניו נדדעזעה א"י ארבע מאות פרסה. אותה שעה אמרו: ארור אדם שיגדל חזירים, וארור אדם שילמד לבנו חכמת יוונית

The mishna taught that during the war of Titus, the Sages decreed that a person should not teach his son Greek. The Sages taught that this decree came about as a result of the following incident: When the kings of the Hasmonean monarchy besieged each other in their civil war, Hyrcanus was outside of Jerusalem, besieging it, and Aristobulus was inside. On each and every day they would lower dinars in a box from inside the city, and those on the outside would send up animals for them to bring the daily offerings in the Temple.

A certain Elder was there, in Jerusalem, who was familiar with Greek wisdom. He communicated to those on the outside by means of Greek wisdom, using words understood only by those proficient in Greek wisdom. He said to them: As long as they are engaged in the Temple service, they will not be delivered into your hands. Upon hearing this, on the following day, when they lowered dinars in a box, they sent up a pig to them. Once the pig reached halfway up the wall, it inserted its hooves into the wall and Eretz Yisrael shuddered four hundred parasangs.

Q: What are your thoughts on this story?

Take note of their names, the fighting, the old man that had to speak the Greek language-- sounds like the outcome of Channukah wasn't so successful. Yet we are celebrating it with great joy... why?

Perhaps this can help explain why the Rambam started off the laws of Channukah the way he did.



4)

בבית שני כְּשֶׁמֶלְכֵי יוֹן גָּזְרוּ גְזָרוֹת עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבָטְלוּ דָתָם וְלֹא הִנִּיחוּ אוֹתָם לַעֲסֹק בַּתּוֹרָה וּבִמְצוֹת.
וּפָשְׁטוּ יָדָם בְּמִמּוֹנָם וּבִבְנוֹתֵיהֶם וְנָכְסוּ לַהֲיָכַל וּפָרְצוּ בוֹ פְּרָצוֹת וְטָמְאוּ הַטְּהָרוֹת. וְצָר לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל
מְאֹד מִפְּנֵיהֶם וּלְחָצוֹם לַחֵץ גָּדוֹל עַד שֶׁרָחַם עֲלֵיהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְהוֹשִׁיעָם מִיָּדָם וְהִצִּילָם וְגָבְרוּ בְּנֵי
חֲשִׁמוֹנָי הַכֹּהֲנִים הַגְּדוֹלִים וְהָרְגוּם וְהוֹשִׁיעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיָּדָם וְהַעֲמִידוּ מֶלֶךְ מִן הַכֹּהֲנִים וַחֲזָרָה מַלְכוּת
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵתֵר עַל מֵאֵתִים שָׁנָה עַד הַחֲרָבָן הַשֵּׁנִי:

During the period of the second Temple, when the Greek kings were in power, they proclaimed decrees against the Jewish people, abrogating their religion and forbidding them to study the Torah or to perform the divine precepts. They laid their hands on their wealth and their daughters; they entered the Temple and broke through it, defiling the things that were pure. The people of Israel were sorely distressed by their enemies, who oppressed them ruthlessly until the God of our fathers took pity, saved and rescued them from the hands of the tyrants. The Hasmonean great priests won victories, defeating the Syrian Greeks and saving Israel from their power. They set up a king from among the priests and **Israel's kingdom was restored for a period of more than two centuries**, until the destruction of the second Temple.

Sovereignty itself in Eretz Israel is a reason for celebration! Even if it ended and we were sent to exile, every year on Channukah we remember how important having our Kingdom back in Eretz Israel is. As it says in the book of Eicha:

מֶלֶכָּהּ וְשָׂרֶיהָ בְּגוֹיִם אֵין תּוֹרָה גַּם־נְבִיאֶיהָ לֹא־מָצְאוּ חֲזוֹן מִיְהוָה: (ס)

Her king and her leaders are in exile, Instruction is no more; Her prophets, too, receive No vision from the LORD.

If we don't have our king, i.e sovereignty in Eretz Israel --our Torah is lacking! That's the celebration of Channukah! Remembering that Am Israel, B'Eretz Israel brings-- Torat Israel!



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