



## Bet Horaah בית הוראה Shaarei Ezra שערי עזרא

Parshat Vayeshev

Zmanim for New York:

Candle Lighting: 4:10pm

Shabbat ends: 5:14pm

R"T 5:41pm

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**IT'S NOT A RIGHT, BUT A PRIVILEGE: THE MERIT OF DEFENDING THE JEWISH NATION**

WRITTEN BY **RABBI SHAY TAHAN**

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It is Chanukah, Baruch Hashem, and the theme of the holiday is consistently referenced in the blessings and prayers. Let's analyze some of the themes highlighted during this special holiday and endeavor to comprehend their significance.

In the Chanukah candle-lighting prayer, (particularly in the Ashkenazi tradition), we express gratitude to Hashem for various blessings, including the acknowledgment and praise for the war fought against the Greeks (על המלחמות). This raises a notable question: Why do we express thanks for the war itself, rather than solely for the victory? Shouldn't our gratitude focus on the outcome of triumph rather than the conflict?

There are several answers to this question. For instance, the Ponovitcher Rav (הרב מפונביץ' ח"ג עמוד 7א) stressed that Jewish wars persist through generations, with the unending threat of those who seek our elimination. Therefore, our expressions of gratitude extend beyond mere victory; encompassing appreciation for surviving the challenges and the continuous ability to endure and engage in the ongoing struggle against those who persistently oppose the Jewish nation.

Perhaps we, too, may suggest an additional, novel approach to this perplexing question.

The answer lies in the recognition that thanking Hashem for the war, encompasses a profound appreciation for the broader narrative.

To grasp this concept accurately, let's delve into the story of Purim, which encapsulates a unique phenomenon applicable to none but the Jewish nation – the right to defend itself. In the Purim narrative, following King Achashverosh's initial decree to exterminate all Jews, there isn't a direct indication that he reverses his decision after Queen Esther's intervention. Instead, a pivotal change occurs: whereas initially, the Jews were not allowed to defend themselves, a shift takes place. Faced with the ongoing

threat of ethnic cleansing, King Achashverosh now permits the Jews to take up arms in self-defense. This marks a distinctive turn of events in the narrative. The pasuk (Esther 8:11) says: "the King had permitted the Jews of every single city to organize and defend themselves...". Another pasuk (Esther 9:15):

"the rest of the Jews throughout the King's providences organized and defended themselves, gaining relief from their foes".

Throughout our devastating exile, marred by various forms of persecution, Am Yisrael has risen to confront their oppressors on only a handful of occasions. In

many instances, the ability to stand up and fight would have been tantamount to an act of suicide.

I always recall witnessing a chilling scene depicting a Nazi demonstration, where a Jewish person faced imminent danger with a dog trained to attack. In a desperate attempt to defend himself, the individual instinctively raised his hands in defense. Tragically, he was ruthlessly shot and killed for the audacity of trying to shield himself from the dog. The brutality of such moments serves as a stark reminder of the generations-long prohibition of the Jewish image being portrayed as defenseless, to the extent that even the individual himself was denied the right to defend against imminent harm.

One such extraordinary occasion was during Chanukah—when a few stood against many, defying all odds—a miracle in itself.

The saga of Chanukah began with the Chashmoneans staunchly defending their right to self-defense. According to the Roman historian Flavius Josephus (The Jewish War, Book 1.34–35), during this period, Antiochus experienced the unexpected conquest of Jerusalem, coupled with looting and widespread slaughter, which failed to satiate his desires. His psychopathic tendencies were further fueled by resentment over the siege's costs. In an attempt to defy the Jews' traditional practices,



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he ordered them to leave their infant sons uncircumcised and to sacrifice pigs on the altar. These commands were universally ignored, prompting Antiochus to ruthlessly execute the most prominent dissenters.

A rural Jewish priest from Modein, Matityahu of the Hasmonean family, initiated the rebellion against the Seleucid Empire when he adamantly refused to worship the Greek gods at Modein's newly erected altar. Matityahu took decisive action by slaying a fellow Jew who volunteered to replace him in the idol sacrifice, along with the Greek officer dispatched to enforce the ritual. He subsequently dismantled the altar as a symbol of resistance.

This phenomenon has reverberated through generations and continues to be relevant today. The enduring question persists: are we permitted to defend ourselves against oppressors? Often, the need for permission is sought from entities such as the United Nations, the United States, Europe, and others.

Another intriguing aspect is the name of the Jewish army, the IDF which stands for the Israel Defense Force. This is unique in the global arena, as the sole nation to have an army explicitly identified with defense. This presents a sort of catch-22: is it an army

meant for offensive actions, or is it stationed to wait and defend? Notably, the IDF has a distinctive approach—never engaging in operations unless provoked by an attack. The sequence is clear: the Jewish people are first attacked, and only then does the IDF respond to protect and defend. Reason given, as explained, the Jewish people must be allowed the opportunity to overcome adversity.

In contemporary times, especially after a brutal massacre, the world once again aligns on two sides: those who acknowledge our right to defend ourselves and those who do not. The essence of self-defense, in this context, involves addressing and eliminating threats that have emerged on our borders.

But even those who support the Jewish people defending themselves is perplexing, akin to portraying Israel as a little kid who, having been bitten by a sibling, seeks permission from their mother to retaliate against the aggressive brother.

Now, we can comprehend the prayer recited when lighting the candles: expressing gratitude for the ability to engage in wars. The capacity to wage war for the Jewish nation appears to be not a right but as a privilege.

**FROM ESTHER TO THE HASMONEANS: RESPONDING TO THREATS IN A MODERN WORLD**

Though the two holidays maintain many similarities, there are several apparent differences between Purim and Chanukah that merit understanding. This not only helps us comprehend the historical events, but also imparts valuable lessons on how to respond in our time and age. For instance, on Purim, Esther and Mordechai did not call upon the people to take up arms in times of danger and the potential annihilation of the Jewish people; instead, they advocated fasting and praying, relying entirely on Hashem's salvation. In contrast, during Chanukah, the Hasmoneans, found in a somewhat similar scenario, engaged in warfare. What distinguishes these approaches?

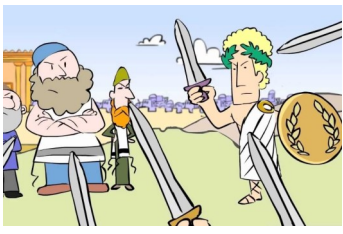
Understanding these differences will also enable us to discern whether the wars and conflicts we face today should be addressed solely through prayer and fasting or also through active means of defense and fighting.

There are several clear differences to consider: During the events of Purim, the Jewish people were scattered across the world, residing in hostile lands where they lacked any means of self-defense. The decree against the Jews was an ominous one: the entire world would unite in a massacre of the Jewish people on a designated day, leaving them with no option for defense or escape.

The odds were overwhelmingly against them, leaving no room for a natural course of victory. In such dire circumstances, Esther and Mordechai advocated prayer and fasting as the only viable choice. On the other hand, during Chanukah, the Jewish community was in the Land of Israel, facing an external enemy. Despite the enemy's numerical and military superiority, the situation allowed for proactive efforts. In situations where one can make efforts (hishtadlut), reliance on Hashem is coupled with taking action, maintaining faith that Hashem will ultimately provide salva-

tion. Just as we find that Yaakov, who faced danger from his brother Esav, besides praying, also prepared to engage in war since he had the ability to do so, even though he was outnumbered by Esav's people.

Similarly, today, when facing a brutal and vicious enemy, there is a need to engage in self-defense as a form of hishtadlut, especially considering that the Jewish people are unified in one place and well-armed.



Another distinction between the holidays is that on Purim, although the decree targeted the physical elimination of the Jews, they didn't look to defy and abuse our daughters, prompting the nation to turn to Hashem for help. Conversely, during Chanukah, the threat went beyond mere

killing, involving the violation of Jewish women. The Rambam (הלכות חנוכה פ"ג ה"א) observes that in the Second Temple period, the Greeks not only plundered our possessions, but also violated our daughters, imposing severe oppression on the Jewish people. This underscores the imperative for nations to recognize that encroaching upon our daughters is a red line that Am Yisrael will not tolerate. This principle is vividly illustrated in the story of Shimon and Levi when Dinah was kidnapped by Shechem ben Hamor – they took decisive action without hesitation, despite the genuine peril they encountered from the surrounding nations, as Yaakov had cautioned them.

The rationale behind the strong response to the violation of our daughters is that our children and daughters are defenseless, completely relying on our protection. When someone entrusts their well-being to you, there is a moral obligation to fulfill the task of safeguarding them and eliminating the oppressor. Needless to say, in today's context, when the subhuman

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enemy attacked our daughters and children, we cannot stand by idly at any cost.

Another evident difference lies in the essence of the wars. There are two types of wars: one is a conventional conflict with a tangible goal, often centered on territorial gain, and the other is a religious war, where the objective is to eliminate those who do not share the same belief or religion. This distinction is evident in the cases of the Greeks and the Persians.

In the Purim narrative, Haman and Achashverosh did not wage a religious war. Their aim was to eliminate the Jews based on the belief that they were a detrimental presence in the world, necessitating their removal. Conversely, during Chanukah, the conflict revolved around the Jewish religion. The Greeks sought to compel the Jews to alter their beliefs and abandon the Jewish religion.

The clear takeaway is that in a religious war, where the very essence of our beliefs is at stake, taking up arms to defend our religion becomes imperative. However, when the threat is solely to our lives, turning to Hashem in prayer and reliance becomes the primary course of action.

The apparent reason is that in a religious war, our primary aim is to seek the honor of Hashem, and we are willing to sacrifice ourselves for His cause. In contrast, in a conventional, non-religious war where our honor and destiny are at stake, we often expect Hashem to intervene on our behalf.

Clearly, today's conflict is a religious war, where the enemy not only seeks to convert all people to their religion but also aims to eliminate those who oppose it.

## HILCHOT CHANUKAH

### Who's obligated to light?

Every person who has a house must light the menorah. One who's a guest, should join the mitzvah of lighting by giving a certain amount of money to the host in order to acquire a share in the oil.

The basic obligation is to light one candle per night for eight days.

Sefaradim who want to do "Hidur Mitzvah" should light an additional light each progressive night, to emphasize the past days of the miracles.

Ashkenazim who want to do "Hidur Mitzvah" should do the same, with the additional caveat of having each male in the household light his own Menorah as well.

### Who lights the Menorah?

For Sefardim therefore only the head of the household should be the one lighting. However, if one wishes to have his children light as well, one may permit children who have reached the age of *chinuch* (about 5-8 years old, depending on the child) to light the **additional candles of Hidur**. However, the mandatory light of the night should only be lit by the head of the household. The *Shamash* may be lit by anyone, even if under the age of *chinuch*.

### When should one light and how long must the Menorah stay lit?

There are two opinions in the Gemara, whether one should light at the beginning of the night and let the light shine, or one can light at any time of night, and leave them lit for the duration of half an hour. Therefore, the best solution is to do both ways: light at the beginning of the night for half an hour.

Regardless one shouldn't light before night.

There are different customs when the night starts for the Mitzvah of lighting. Some (סדר היום, ש"ל"ה, גר"א, פר"ח) are of the opinion that it is from Shkia (sunset), some say (אגר"מ ח"ד סק"א) 10 minutes after Shkia, some hold 20 minutes (Chazon Ish), and some waited 25 minutes (Rav Aaron Kotler). Though there are other opinions as well, but the Shulchan Aruch rules, to wait until stars come out **וצאת הכוכבים** and this is the prevailing Sefardi Minhag as well.

Those who didn't light at the beginning of the night, may light all night (especially in streets that are always busy even at late hours), since many hold that today the main lighting is meant for the people of the house and as long as there is someone else there with him, one should light with a Beracha.

### What happens if the Menorah blew out during the *zman*?

Even if the Menorah blew out during the *zman*, one need not re-light the Menorah, and there is no distinction of whether it's the mandatory lights or the "Hidur" lights. Moreover, after the first half-hour, one may even extinguish the flames himself.

### Doing work at time of lighting

At time of lighting one may not do any work, not even house work or regular tasks. If he started working before the time of lighting it's still preferable to stop in order to go and light. (בסי' תלא ס"ב)

### May women fry donuts while the Menorah is lit?

Although the custom is that women shouldn't do any *Melachot*—work while the candles are lit, this is only limited to sewing, laundry, ironing, etc. (the *melachot* which women accepted upon themselves to refrain from on Rosh Chodesh). However, if cooking/frying could be done beforehand or after the first half hour of the Menorah being lit, that is best.

### Should I first pray Arvit, or should I light the Menorah first?

If possible, one should try to pray Arvit first, and then light the Menorah as the general rule is "תדיר ושאינו תדיר-תדיר קודם". However, if one has a set Minyan which he usually prays in, even if it's after the *zman*, one may light the Menorah in its proper time and pray at his usual Minyan.

### How do I light on Erev Shabbat?

On Erev Shabbat, one should try to pray Mincha earlier so that he may light the Menorah closer to the right time, and then he can go to shul. However, this is only if it's accessible; one should **not** however pray *b'yachid* (on his own, without a *minyan*) in order to fulfill this Hidur. Rather, one should light at home, and then proceed to shul and pray Mincha.

**\*\*\*Being that one will be lighting prior to shkia on Erev Shabbat, one should make sure to put adequate oil to stay lit throughout the zman.\*\*\***

### How do I light on Motzei Shabbat, before or after Havdalah?

Though there is a *machloket* regarding the order of Havdalah and lighting the Menorah, the prevailing custom amongst both Sefardim and Ashkenazim is to differentiate between the order it's done

HILCHOT CHANUKAH

in Shul, and the way it's done in one's house. In Shul, the Menorah should be lit first, and then Havdalah be recited; whereas in the home, the order is reversed.

**What should I do if I'm going away for Shabbat, but I'll be coming home on Motzei Shabbat, albeit past the proper zman?**

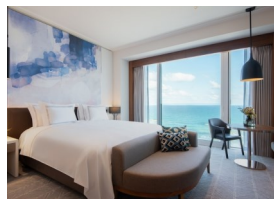
If somebody went away for Shabbat, and will be returning to their own home on Motzei Shabbat, even if they'll be returning much later than the ideal zman, one should wait and light at home.

**What happens if I forgot to say Al Hanissim during Tefilah or Birkat HaMazon?**

Although one is required to say Al Hanissim during all 8 days of Chanukah during Tefilah and Birkat HaMazon, if one forgot, if one remembered prior to commencing the Beracha, one should say Al Hanissim and only after should he continue with finishing the bracha. However, if one remembered only after finishing the Bracha, one need not go back and recite it.

**נרות חנוכה לעקורים מביתם.**

וכן הביא הגרי"ש אלישיב (אשרי איש חנוכה פרק לט הלכה יא) שאין רשאי להדליק בלובי על השלחן, והוסיף שאם אין מרשים לו להדליק בפתח חדרו, צריך לחפש מקום אחר, ומשמע שאינו יכול להליק בשום מקום אחר במלון. וכן פסק הגר"צ אבא שאול באור לציון (ח"ד עמוד רפט) שאין יוצא ידי חובתו בחדר האוכל של המלון, אלא ידליק בחדרו כיון שישן שם והחדר מושכר לו באופן פרטי. וכתב הגרי"ש אלישיב שאם המלון אינו מרשה לו להדליק בחדר אסור להדליק ואם הדליק ללא רשות הוא גל ולא יצא ידי חובתו. ויש להסביר דבריו שכיון שהשכירו לו את החדר בתנאי שלא ידליק שם, אם כן המדליק עבר על התנאי ונחשב זה כאילו שוהה בחדר ללא רשות.



**שלום למערכת אתר ואללה. יש לי שאלה לכבוד הרב. רבים מתושבי דרום הארץ וצפון הארץ כידוע עכשיו עקורים מביתם ונמצאים בבתי מלון. היכן עליהם להדליק את נרות החנוכה?**


שלום לכם.

אדם השוכר חדר בבית מלון ידליק בחדרו שכן אותו חדר נחשב כביתו לזמן שהוא שוהה שם, דמאי שנא מבית רגיל שהוא שוכר. וכן גם כתב המהרש"ם (ח"ד סימן קמו) שמי ששוכר חדר ברכבת ללילה, אותו חדר נחשב כביתו לגבי ההדלקה.



ופשוט שאין להדליק בלובי ובפרוזדור כיון שאינו מקום המיוחד לו, וכמו כן אין להדליק בחדר האוכל המשותף כיון שאינו מיוחד לו, ורק ניתן לו רשות שימוש כיון שהוא שוכר חדר במלון, ולא כמו שכתבו כמה מספרי זמנינו שחשבו שכיון שהרמ"א (סימן תרע"ד ס"א) כתב שיש להדליק במקום אכילה לכן ידליק בחדר האוכל, וזה אינו כמו שביארנו שהמקום צריך להיות שלו.

יתכן שהאופן בו נמצאים היום המפונים, דהיינו שהם מתארחים במלון לתקופה ארוכה, אם הם אוכלים תמיד בחדר האוכל ויש לכל אחד שלחן ומקום קבוע לו ולמשפחתו שאז יוכל להדליק שם אם אכן בעלי המלון אינם מרשים להדליק בחדרים. ויהי רצון שבחג אורים זה נצא מאפילה לאורה והקב"ה יעשה לנו נסים כשם שעשה לנו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

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