

# CLASS 57 - CHANUKAH - ROSH CHODESH TEVES

*by Rabbi Heshy Grossman*

Each of the holidays is associated with a particular month of the year. This is true as well for public fast days, which are described in the Torah as a function of Tzom HaRevii (Shiva Asar B'Tamuz) or Tzom HaChamishi (Tisha B'Av), etc.

Even a later holiday, Purim, though observed on a specific day, contains aspects that relate to the month of Adar in general. For this reason, under certain conditions, the Mitzvos of Purim can be fulfilled at any time during the month of Adar.

Chanukah is unique.

Straddling the months of Kislev and Teves, it relates to both, but belongs to neither. Separate from the lunar cycle that defines our calendar year, Chanukah celebrates a period of its own.

In our shiur this week, we will define the nature of the holiday cycle, clarifying the special function of Chanukah in a hostile world.

1

If the new year begins with Tishrei, why is Chodesh Nissan the first month?

Our calendar is one of months, not years.

While the lunar calendar follows a cycle of twelve distinct months, the rotation of the earth around the sun is measured by one full year, with no separate monthly parts.

The Jewish year, which follows the shifting moon, is our connection to a new world order, separate and distinct from the unchanging, natural flow of the sun that empowers the culture of secular society.

The exodus from Egypt revealed the Hand of G-d that underlies all of creation, alluding to a deeper, supernatural order directing the world towards a higher purpose.

Pesach, then, is first of the Mo'adim. The word 'Mo'ed' is a derivative of 'Ya'ad' - destiny. Each Chag is a transit station leading Klal Yisrael to its G-dly destiny. Every holiday is 'Zecher L'Yetzias Mitzraim', a further manifestation of the miraculous pattern of Divine providence controlling our world, developing and bringing forth a subtler understanding of life's true focus.

Beginning with Nissan, the month of 'Nissim', these holidays mark the unique cycle of the Jewish

year, a different sort of time, each month with a sign of its own. In answer to our question, the fact that the year begins six months later poses no difficulty, for the yearly calendar measures a different, though parallel cycle.

Chanukah, though, is not part of this heavenly pattern, with no connection to Yetzias Mitzraim.

## 2

"LaMenatzeach Al Ayeles HaShachar (Tehillim 22) ....Said Rebbe Assi: Why is Esther compared to the dawn? Just as dawn marks the end of the night, similarly, Esther marks the end of all miracles. But, what about Chanukah? We are referring only to those miracles that are destined to be written." (Yoma 29a)

Esther, and the holiday of Purim are the last of the miracles of Torah SheB'Ksav. Though Chanukah also celebrates a miraculous salvation, the battle of the Chashmonaim is not part of the Biblical literature.

This distinction is more than a chronological accident of time, it defines a different sort of victory, the defeat of the forces of darkness.

"...'V'Choshech' - this is Malchus Yavan, who darkened the eyes of Israel with their decrees..." (Breishis Rabbah, 2:5)

The creation of the world is enacted with two differing levels of Divine influence, one of full bounty, reflecting G-d's shining countenance, and one of limited measure, an expression of Hester Panim.

The basic status of natural law, manifest in everyday life, conceals G-d's Hand behind a curtain of cause and effect that appears to be self-sustaining. The open miracles of Yetzias Mitzraim shred this veil to pieces, revealing nature to be a mere facade. This process of discovery continued throughout the desert travels, culminating with Mattan Torah and the building of the Mishkan. The sanctity brought to light during the exodus becomes a permanent fixture in the life of the Jewish people with the Shalosh Regalim, each reflecting a particular aspect of Divine revelation.

In other words, Klal Yisrael enters a new dimension, a world apart from the humdrum drudgery of the nations. Removed from the dark confines of a limited influence, they bask in the blinding light of a supernal realm, seeing G-d at every turn.

This was a level of Kedushah written for eternity, enlightening all the world to G-d's word.

Chanukah, on the other hand, is a private affair - Ner Ish U'Beiso.

Darkness is cause of two problems. Firstly, in the absence of light, man cannot see where to turn, the likelihood being that he will stumble and fall. In addition, at times one may confuse a pillar for a man, right from wrong, or vice-versa. This error is a more serious mistake, for, certain that he had seen a true picture of his surroundings, he proceeds with careless abandon.

The Shalosh Regalim illuminate a new horizon, lifting our spirits in protection, lighting up the long, dark night of the physical world.

If Purim is the dawn at the edge of night, Chanukah, that follows, is part of the day.

The Chagim are part of Torah SheB'Ksav, for the world discovers a celestial dimension to existence, granting purpose and direction to the desolate void of a life without G-d.

Chanukah remains part of the Oral Tradition, known only to those who search for a different sort of light.

Chanukah exists in a night that the world mistakenly believes to be day.

### 3

The culture of the modern world has declared war upon the night.

The bustling center of the new empires pride themselves as cities that never sleep, lighting up the night for those who revel till dawn. Lifestyle options see no distinction between day and night, for civilization continues to thrive long after the sun has set.

Society is saying this: We have conquered all horizons, reached the heights of human achievement, overcome all obstacles. Nothing will blacken our joy, or dampen our pursuit of pleasure. There are no limits to our understanding, and no barriers to be crossed, all the world is clear as day.

This is the message of Yavan, a wisdom that pretends to have all the world within its grasp.

The truth is quite different.

Despite the dazzling lights of the city center, one need only retreat to the outskirts of town to discover that the dark and lonely night is still black as can be. The droning reassurance of a complacent society notwithstanding, man still senses the uncomfortable, niggling feeling that his destiny lies in the dark oblivion of a spiritual dimension he has chosen to ignore.

Chanukah is not meant to be written, for it is a holiday of our own, guarantor that the singularity of Klal Yisrael remains vibrant and alive.

What the world knows as day, we know as night.

Olam HaZeh Domeh LaLayla.

Rejecting the temptations of a beckoning world, we retreat to our homes and families to light a small candle. We don't light up the night with miracles. On the contrary, we highlight the enveloping darkness with an inner glow that separates us from the nations and their world.

The nights of Chodesh Teves are the longest of the year. Chanukah defines the night, comforting the faithful with the promise of a new dawn.

A society that is certain of its sparkling daylight is destined to witness the setting of its sun, for after the day, evening always comes.

Klal Yisrael counts the stars at night, knowing that someday soon, the sun will rise once again.

"Az Egmor B'Shir Mizmor, Chanukas HaMizbe'ach"

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