



חנוכה

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Light of Loyalty

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Part I. Miracles on the Battlefield

Chanukah: Two Attitudes

When the Gemara (Shabbos 22b) asks “מאי חנוכה – For which nes did the Chachomim establish Chanukah?” the answer given is that it’s the nes of the shemen, when a little bit of oil miraculously lasted for eight days. You want to know what the yomtov is all about? It’s the miracle of the oil; that’s Chanukah.

When you look in the siddur however, in Al Hanissim, we’re surprised to find that the nes shemen is not mentioned at all. It’s hinted at maybe; after all we say al hanissim – nissim is plural so you could say that the nes shemen is included. Also, we say that when the Chashmonaim rededicated the Beis Hamikdash והקריבו קרבות ברחצרות קדש, they lit the candles in Your holy courtyard. It doesn’t say anything about the miracle but it’s a hint. It should have said והקריבו קרבות, that they brought karbonos. The neiros are certainly an important service in the Mikdash but the karbonos are maybe even more

important; there are other things too that are important. And still it’s the neiros that are mentioned – probably it’s because of the nes shemen.

But whatever it is, as many hints as you might find, it doesn’t say anything openly about the shemen. It’s talking about gevuros and teshuos and milchamos, about military successes on the battlefield.

The Gratitude Attitude

And so we’ll say as follows. There are two elements in the yomtov of Chanukah. One, the one that we speak about in the davening – you have to know that Modim, in which we say Al Hanissim, is dedicated especially for expressing thanks; that’s the purpose of that brachah and therefore it’s the right place for us to express our gratitude for the fact that we, a very small army, were able to withstand a powerful military opponent like the king of Syria and his army.

It was a tremendous thing! The enemy came with a big army against a peace-loving people who were not prepared for any war and it seemed that

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the plan to wipe out the entire practice of the Torah *chas v'shalom* would succeed. Only that Hakadosh Baruch Hu intervened and He gave us victories.

And so while it's true that the *yomtov* of Chanukah was established primarily because of the *nes shemen*, but when it comes to gratitude we won't be so hardhearted, so ungrateful, as to ignore the miracle of the wars. Chanukah is *לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל*, for thanking Hashem, and that means we don't want to overlook anything.

Even to this day we're enthralled by that story of our victories on the battlefield; of families hiding in caves in the mountains and men venturing out to attack a much stronger enemy. It was an impossible thing it seemed. And it *was* impossible; only that Hashem gave us victory. And so we won't forget that; we won't ever forget what He did for us. It was a lot of fun when a handful of men under Yehudah Hamacabi rushed forward with swords and hacked down an army that was far more superior to them; and they left a field that was full of dead bodies. We owe a big debt of gratitude to Hashem for that.

Remember the Details

And so we go all out in our expressions of gratitude. When it comes to *hakaras hatov* it's important to talk details. Just to say the words *על ההם* *הָהֵם בְּזַמַּן הַזֶּה* *הַנָּסִים שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזַמַּן הַזֶּה*, that's nothing. It's like paying with a check but you don't sign it on the bottom. Signing means that you mean it, that there's actual feelings of gratitude standing behind your words and for that you need to think details – *what* are the miracles He did for us, that's the point!

And the greater attention you pay to detail, the greater you are in fulfilling your obligation. That's why we'll enumerate: “the strong were given over into the hands of the weak, the many in the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure ones, the wicked in the hands of the righteous.”

‘The stronger enemy fell into our weaker hands’. A small little army, not well armed, not well trained, they were able to overcome a large standing army of a powerful monarch, an army of trained soldiers,

people who lived for battle. You have to remember that the enemy's soldiers weren't enlisted for a short time; it was a lifetime career. And they started not at eighteen years of age. These were military families where the children grew up in the army; that was their profession, from father to son. As children, they could handle the spear and throw a javelin. They were taught to shoot the bow while running or while riding on horseback.

The Non-Combatants

Our nation however was never a fighting nation. Like Josephus says, “we are not like other predator nations who engage in wars of conquest, in order to enrich themselves from the spoils of their neighbors.” We didn't do that. We lived a quiet life to ourselves; our people were busy with the plow or with the arts of peace like Torah. And therefore it was a very unequal contest. But the Hand of Hashem was revealed on the battlefield and *גְּבוּרִים בְּיַד הַלְּשָׁמַיִם*, the strong were given over into the hands of the weak. That's a big *nes!* Absolutely Chanukah includes that.

But it wasn't only strength and military training. The numbers were even more staggeringly unequal. That's what we say *רַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים*, the miracle of a multitude falling into the hands of the few. When it comes to gratitude we have to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for that as well. If a few Jews, a ragtag group, can trounce entire military divisions, that's something.

Righteous Justice

And then we add that it was the *טְמֵאִים בְּיַד צְדִיקִים* – *The impure into the hands of the pure and the wicked fell into the hands of the righteous.* That's something else – not only the victory is fun, but it's a *simchah* when we see the wicked get their comeuppance, their just deserts. Those whose minds are filled with filth, with impure ideas, *should* be defeated. Those who act with wickedness *should* fall in battle; and we like to see that with our own eyes. That they'll get it in the Next World, we know, but it's more fun when we can see it in this world too!

Not only were the *resha'im* defeated, but we thank for the added *simcha*, the added happiness that they were defeated by *tzaddikim*. That's why we go out of our way to say *בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים* and *בְּיַד טְהוּרִים*; the wicked were defeated by the righteous! It's a great happiness to see the *tzaddikim* win out in this world.

Look, when a *rasha* is walking in the street and he falls down dead, so we say "Baruch Hashem." We say, "Baruch Hashem, kein yirbu." But suppose a *rasha* would start up with a little *tzaddik*; he starts up with a *chassidische* boy holding a big Mesechta Bava Basra under his arm, a skinny little *chassidische* boy. And this little boy takes his little fist or maybe his big Gemara and he gives the *rasha* a whack over the head and the *rasha* falls down dead. That's even better, no question about it! Not only is it a tough brute falling into the hands of a weakling, but it's *רְשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים*, the wicked one was felled by the righteous one! That itself is a special *simchah*!

Kollel Fighters

And not just in the hands of *frum* righteous Jews; the Jews who were victorious were the *kohanim*, the ones who learned and taught Torah. *בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתְךָ* – the wicked sinners fell into the hands of those who study Your Torah.

When the battle was won for us on the battlefield, it was won by the Torah teachers. Those whose function is not to fight but *yoru mishpatecha leYaakov*, to teach the Torah to the Am Yisroel, when they took the sword and the spear and went into battle, it wasn't their sword that saved us. It was the merit of their *avodas Hashem* that helped them have the victory. It was their Torah and their righteousness that saved us. That's an additional detail that we thank for. We are encouraged when the Torah people are the winners in this world. And therefore, *בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתְךָ* is wonderful! It's a very big *simcha*.

And so there's a lot to be *le'hallel u'lehodos* about! If you'll say the *tefillah* of *Al Hanissim* slowly and think into the words you'll find more than my poor words. You'll find a treasure of details. That's

what *Al Hanissim* is for; *עַל הַמְּלַחְמוֹת שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ*, to thank for all of those victories. And the end was that *יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְּדוֹלָה*; the Am Yisroel became independent. The Chashmonaim ruled and we were a nation by ourselves for a certain amount of time.

Asking the Sages

But as great as all of those *nissim* were and as important as it is to express our gratitude for them in our davening, the Chachomim came along and pushed all of that into the background. They want us to know that there is something even bigger than that: *מַאי הֲנִכְּהָ – What is Chanukah about? עַל אֵיזָה נֶס קִבְּעוּהָ – for which nes did they really make Chanukah?* (Rashi, *ibid.*) *דִּתְּנוּ רַבְּנָן – The rabbanan* came along and told us what others might not have told us.

That's an important point; it's the *rabbanan* who interpret history for us. We have to learn the secrets of history not from soldiers – even *frum* soldiers, even pious soldiers. And not from *frum* rulers, *frum* politicians – even the ones that are *moser nefesh* for *yiddishkeit*, who give their lives for the Torah. They are not the ones.

If you have a *frum* Jew who is in charge of the state of Eretz Yisroel – a *frum* Jew with long *peyos* and he wears a *kapoteh* too – he's good only as an administrator, maybe as a general. That's all. But when we want an interpretation of history, when we want to know what's taking place, someone to tell us the truth of the situation, we can't ask him. We have to go into the Eitz Chaim Yeshiva or into the Chevron Yeshiva or Ponevezh and ask the *roshei yeshivah* what's doing and they'll tell us.

A Separate Ceremony

And therefore when it comes to answering the question *מַאי הֲנִכְּהָ*, we don't ask anybody except the Chachomim; *דִּתְּנוּ רַבְּנָן*, that's who we ask. And what do they say? That it's the *nes* of the *shemen* that burned eight days; that's what Chanukah is. Our Sages want us to know that all of the miracles that took place on the battlefield were overshadowed

by the lessons of that little light that burned on and on in the Mikdash.

And because we want to be sure to emphasize the real essence of *Chanukah*, that's why we don't mix the *nes* of the oil into *Al Hanissim*. We hint at it but we don't want to speak about it at length in *davening* because then it would lose its character as being most important. We defeated the enemy *and we also had a miracle of the menorah?! No, no.* That would be belittling the lesson of the *nes* of the oil; you'd be making a mistake about what *Chanukah* is really about.

And therefore the *nes* of *Chanukah* is played out by itself in our homes. Every night it's a ceremony that stands out on its own where nothing else but the oil is commemorated in order that we should focus on studying the lesson of the flame.

Part II. Miracles in the Mind

Flame of the Mind

Now, what is the flame trying to tell us? The truth is, many things. Everyone knows that something is awakened when gazing at the burning lights. As it flickers and dances it arouses something within us. Don't you remember even as a child you sat and stared at the *Chanukah* lights and you were thinking? Not only about *Mattisyahu* and his heroic children who gave their lives fighting for *Hashem's Torah*; you were thinking of many things – because that's the magic of a flame – it brings forth from the depths of our minds various emotions. And the Sages knew that; they wanted the flames to inspire our souls and teach us many things.

And yet, even though it's many things, more than anything else the flame is trying to tell us about what we *really* accomplished **בְּיָמֵינוּ הָיָה מִצְטַדֵּק הַיָּהוָה**; that it wasn't what took place on the battlefield that was most important. If the battlefield is your concept of *Chanukah*, it falls very short of the truth because the greatest accomplishment, the greatest miracle, took place far away from the battlefield – the greatest accomplishment took place in the

privacy of our own hearts, in the battle for our minds.

Culture Shock

I'll explain that. If we're going to really understand what the light of the *menorah* represents we have to first understand that the Syrian-Greeks came not only with the power of a tremendous army *but they came with the power of a tremendous culture.* That was more powerful and more threatening than the army. The civilization of Greece was behind them. It wasn't just the Syrian-Greek army. It was their way of life; it was the Greek culture they were facing and at that time it was the culture of the world.

It was the entire civilized world they were facing. To the north, there was Syria. Then there was Greece and the whole Mediterranean sector of the world. Egypt was already entirely Hellenized. Asia Minor was all Hellenized. And Italy was under Greek influence. And so the entire civilized world at that time was Grecian. If you were anybody in this world, you had fallen under the spell of Greek enlightenment.

They had everything – everything that was considered important in those days. They had philosophy. They had a certain understanding of chemistry. They had mathematics, geometry and trigonometry. They had a very big literature. And not only a literature of serious philosophy. They had a literature of entertainment, a big romantic literature. They had the drama; Greek theater was very much developed. They had art and music. They had sports on a big scale, hippodromes. In one word, the Greeks were the exponents of civilization in those days.

Rejecting Man-Made Culture

Now we, the Am Yisroel, up till that time, we were isolated from all the *umos ha'olam*. We had our own 'culture' *lehavdil*, our own ways, and there was no interest in what the world had to offer. It was the Jewish attitude to remain within their own four cubits because our *Torah* is a *Torah* not made

by men; it was given by Hashem at Sinai and therefore we didn't want to water it down by bringing in manmade ideas.

The Greeks, however, when they saw this little enclave of the Israelites, the Jews, they thought it would be the biggest favor if they could import Greek civilization to this benighted people. It's always like that – if you don't understand Torah attitudes, Torah living, so from the outside you imagine that you have what to offer. And so when they began proposing to the Jews that they adopt the ways of the Greeks, they were surprised at the reluctance of the Jews. And they became offended because it seemed so stupid to them – these savages, these superstitious and backward people are actually opposing us.

Not only offended; a hatred developed. After all, everybody else willingly joined into the Greek celebrations. When the time came to get drunk at the Greek festival, everybody joined in. If it's wine and women and song, everybody is a customer for that – especially if you give it the name 'culture' – and therefore at the festivals of the Greeks, everybody was there!

Of course, a Babylonian, let's say, who still had his own gods, so after he finished with the Greek festivals, he'd go and the next week get drunk at the Babylonian festival. He had no objections, however, to the Greek festivals. He joined in with all his heart!

No to Nightlife

But when the Greeks were celebrating, they looked around and they saw there was one group that refused to join them. "Who are you?! Are you so enlightened that you're able to resist the Greek culture? Who does the little backward Jew think he is?"

"We're offering you an enlightened civilization! Here, instead of your lifeless cities, we'll give you life. What do you have in your cities at night? For how long are you going to be so stubborn in your loyalty to your G-d? We're offering you nightlife!"

It's like when Teddy Kollek was defeated as mayor of Jerusalem, so the one who sat *shivah* for him most was the New York Times. "Ay, ay, ay, a tragedy that Jerusalem should lose such an enlightened figure." They were praising Teddy Kollek – the good things he did for Yerushalayim. "When he was in power, it started becoming a modern city and there's even a little bit of nightlife there," they said. You hear that 'praise' on him – a little bit of nightlife also was beginning to develop in Yerushalayim and now, *nebach*, he was defeated. That's what the New York Times understands that we're missing. From Manhattan, the armpit of the world, that's what they're telling us – "What do you have?"

The Original Nightlife

What did we have? Torah. At night, they gathered together and they sat on the ground and the teacher taught them. That's how it used to be. We have *chessed!* We have families! We have *nachas!* We have mitzvos! We have Olam Haba! We have Shabbos! We have *yomim tovim!*

But the Greeks however had other ideas. Our Shabbos, our *yomim tovim*, were days of quiet and reserved happiness while the Greek celebrations were loud; the entire city was garlanded with flowers and everywhere there was a sound of music. There were huge throngs coming to see the Greek plays and the games. And so they thought that into the backwards cities of Judea they were going to bring in now the light of Greek culture. They were going to modernize us; to give us a nightlife and entertainment, gymnasiums and theater; they were going to bring the gaieties of life to the lifeless Jews.

The Fifth Column

Now we shouldn't shy away from the fact that they were encouraged in this by the Hellenizers. Just like you have today, quislings, weaklings who aren't loyal to Torah ideals but they couch their weaknesses in wanting to bring light to their fellow Jews, then also there were certain Jews who had tasted of the gentile ways, and they buckled. Of

course, they didn't say that – they had 'pity' on their fellow Jews. This old kind of life is only for backward people and it's time that we taught our nation that there are more important things in life; we'll teach them to enjoy, to understand what's better. And therefore they encouraged Antiochus to force Greek culture upon the Jews in Eretz Yisroel.

They spoke to fellow Jews too. "Look. You see what's happening. This is the wave of the future. After all, these people are educated. They have all their luxuries and have all their progress and that's what's happening all over the world today! And you're going to oppose them? The Greek culture," they said, "is conquering the world!"

And so we have to understand what a test our forefathers had, what an ordeal they had. Not merely as we thought, an ordeal of battling against a superior military force, of fighting an empire. No, that was nothing compared to the real battle. The actual battle was the ordeal of withstanding an onslaught of ideas and attitudes; of culture and enlightenment and advancement and good times. It was a battle not only of the sword. It was a battle of the mind. That was the real battle we were fighting against the Greeks.

Acid Tests

And it was a most difficult kind of battle. It's not easy to oppose a world civilization; that was the acid test that our forefathers were confronted with. I know it was a bitter test because I saw with my own eyes what happened in America many years ago when the greenhorns were still coming to America from Europe. The first and biggest *nisayon* was that they came from *shtetlach*, small towns. Most of the towns had no electricity at all – maybe all of them. In 1900, 1905, they came to America and everywhere there were gas lights. Gas light was a very great invention in those days. The streets were well-lit. In the homes also you had gas lights. And so they came to a place that wasn't backward.

And that was the biggest factor. They were small shopkeepers, small-town people from little

villages, who never saw any of these inventions that they had in all homes in America at that time, and because these greenhorns were terribly impressed, they became *batel* to the culture of America. They caved in entirely. They were overwhelmed by this powerful superior culture and they thought 'we're *batel*; we're nobody'. Not only we're nobody but our whole tradition is nothing. And they caved in and got lost.

It was so difficult that even people who learned in the *yeshivos* caved in. I remember I saw a Telzer *yeshivah* man who had a grocery store open on Shabbos. He sat in the store on Shabbos and between the customers he learned Gemara. That's how it began, a little bit of weakening. What happened to his children? Gone. All gone. One child is in a nunnery. It was a generation of Jews that was swallowed up in the crematorium of America. *Baruch Hashem* a little bit remained. A *sha'ar yashuv*, here and there, but most caved in under the pressure of a new, more 'advanced' culture.

Keeping Our Promise

But in those days it wasn't one in a thousand that remained loyal. In the time of Chanukah the spirit of the Am Yisroel did not falter, didn't yield, and a great majority remained loyal to the Torah. Not only they fought fiercely and bravely on the battlefield – but more important is what they were fighting for. They were fighting for the promise they had made to Hashem many years before on Har Sinai. They had made a promise – *naaseh v'nishma* – and they weren't going to budge an inch. That's why they fought – because they didn't want to yield to the power and the wealth and the culture and the influence that was being exerted against them.

In those days the Am Yisroel demonstrated the fire of their spirit, that no matter how great and powerful and cultured and wealthy your opponent is, we are the Am Hashem; the old traditional 'backward' people of Hashem. We're facing backward from the whole world and that's how it's going to be no matter what you entice us with.

Keeping His Promise

And that's what the *nes* of the *shemen* came for. Because they were so fiercely loyal to Hashem, because they lit that flame of loyalty in their hearts, they were rewarded with a tremendous demonstration of approval by Hashem. Hashem encouraged them with that *nes*: "Yes, you are loyal to Me, and I'm going to be with you."

When they saw that flame burning beyond the time – eight days it burned; one day's supply of oil burned eight days – they saw that their loyalty was being requited. They went wild with happiness: "The Shechinah is among us! And so we'll continue fighting. We'll continue!"

You know after they kindled the *neiros*, they fought for thirty more years before they finished the wars. They fought because the flame of loyalty was burning strong. And therefore, **נְאִי הַנֶּכְחָה** – what is Chanukah? Chanukah is the great symbol of those who, no matter what, would keep that flame of loyalty burning.

Part III. The Miracle of Emunah

Flame of Emunah

And so we understand now what the *menorah's* light is telling us. When you light the flame of Chanukah what is it saying? It's saying one word that is the secret of our success: It's *emunah*. The Chanukah light is the light of *emunah*.

Now, *emunah* is understood by the world as 'believing', but that's not the real meaning of the word. To believe, you have to know, is a secondary meaning of the word. The original and primary meaning of *emunah* means 'steadfast'; to continue without any change.

When it states that Moshe Rabbeinu had to raise his hands up – during the war against Amalek his hands were weary so they put two stones under his arms to keep them up. **וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֲמוּנָה עַד בֹּא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ** – *And his hands were emunah until sundown* (Shmos 17:12).

His hands were believing? Hands can't believe. **וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֲמוּנָה** means his hands were *steadfast*. He didn't take down his hands. They didn't move from their place. That's the meaning. It has nothing to do with believing. His hands didn't weaken; they didn't falter.

Stubborn Loyalty

That's a whole new understanding of what *emunah* means. A person who once heard and he understood why you have to be a good Jew, it's not enough. Yes, he believes. He's convinced. But a person can yield his loyalty. All kinds of things turn up in life that might make him hesitate or weaken.

Emunah means that once you know the truth then you have to be stubborn in your loyalty to hold onto that truth. Not to be frightened off or to be tempted, to be bribed. New fads, new ideas and ideals, new ways, 'better' ways, mean nothing to the man of *emunah*. He's going to remain loyal to the principles of the Torah no matter what.

Even if you don't know much, but the *middah* of loyalty says you won't budge. Let's say you're an 'ignoramus'. You never went to college. You never read a book. All you know is nothing but Shas. You know no science at all. You never studied geology, you never studied biology, you don't know anything. And here somebody comes and tells you, "Look, there are fossils and the fossils are so many millions of years old and they're arranged one on top of the other in such a sequence that it proves conclusively that one animal developed into another animal and evolution is a proven fact and you people are going against the most open evidence. Even the Department of Education of New York State says so!"

Ignorant Loyalists

Now, you're not schooled in these things. You don't know how to answer. What are you expected to do? You're expected to say, "They can bring all the evidence in the world. When I was at Har Sinai, I gave my promise to my beloved One. I said 'na'aseh v'nishma' and nothing in the world will ever cause

me to budge from my promise. I gave my word. I promised with all the fire of which I am capable and I'm going to stick to that through thick and thin. If you'll skin me alive, that's what I'm going to hold onto till the end of my life."

That's what it means to be a Jew. To be a Jew doesn't mean that you're a scientist and you can answer. We *can* answer by the way. We can make monkeys out of the people who think they came from monkeys. We can expose it as one of the most vicious hoaxes that ever appeared in history. There is material without end to show how false, how malicious, how schemingly planned the hoax of evolution and geology is arranged. The whole thing!

I'd love to speak about this – not tonight – to ridicule them, to show what fakers they are, what criminal frauds they are. I'll quote from their own books that the admission of their weakness is so widespread in every field of biology, in every field of geology, one contradicts the other and they admit their weaknesses and it's nothing but wishful thinking. Ridiculous lies!

But suppose you don't know anything. Suppose you don't know what to say. It makes no difference! You have to say, "Emunah." *Emunah* means not 'belief'. *Emunah* means loyalty. That's the meaning of the word.

Standing Strong

We are always *ne'eman* no matter what. Come against us with your culture. Come against us with new attitudes. Come with all of your blandishments. We're not interested. We already gave our word and we are loyal to Him forever.

And even if you come with your armies, no matter; we already gave our word. That's what the Chashmonaim said. When they saw that the Syrians-Greeks with their powerful army and their wealthy government were undertaking a *gezeiras hashmad* against us, Matisyahu told the people, "Forget about that! There is no such thing as extinguishing the fire that burns in our hearts."

And he rekindled in the hearts of the people that light of steadfastness, *ne'emanus*, not to yield. We are always *ne'eman* no matter what! You'll chase us into caves? So be it. You'll light fires at the cave entrances and smoke us out? We still won't yield. And therefore when Mattisyahu raised his sword it was a sword of *emunah*. That's the foundation of the entire story of Chanukah, the *middah* of loyalty.

Guarding the Loyal

And that's why they eventually won their battles. They won battles on the battlefield not because of special fighting tactics. No; they won battles because of the fires they lit in their hearts. ה' אֲמוּנִים נִצְרָה – *Hashem guards the loyal ones* (Tehillim 31:24). Because they have the *middah* of *ne'emanus*, Hashem has a special protection for them.

Loyalty is a *middah* that Hakadosh Baruch Hu prizes. עֵינָי בְּנֶאֱמָנֵי אֶרֶץ – *His eyes are watching over His loyal ones* (*ibid.* 101:6). And when it's done by the entire nation – by a majority at least – when everybody is loyal to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, so you can have a *nes Chanukah*.

Now this is a very important lesson for us. We *baruch Hashem* don't have that today – we're not running away into the mountains to do *mitzvos* – but we need that same *emunah*. We have to be very careful. On all sides we have ideas and *minhagim* of the people around us. Modern Orthodox are changing. They're dropping some *frum* practices, adopting some gentile ideas. Little by little the modern Orthodox are changing. I say modern Orthodox – today even the good ones, the best, the *frumest*, are weakening before Western culture, before the attitudes and ideals of the outside world.

So Chanukah comes and tells us that we have to be *ultra-frum*; *ultra-frum* means we won't change. We refuse to change because our stubborn loyalty won't allow us to yield at all.

Rekindling Old Flames

I must tell you, if you're a family that speaks Yiddish, keep on speaking Yiddish. Don't change. Don't change. If you don't speak Yiddish, at least

everything else. There's no other way. Don't listen to the modern Orthodox at all. On all sides the *yetzer hara* comes and tries to persuade you to make a little change here, a little change there. "Nothing doing! I'm going to continue stubbornly in the way that my grandfather did and my great-grandfather did."

On Pesach I'll have a *seder* in my house. No hotels. No hotels! A Jewish home is *kodesh kadashim*. The home is holy because there's a *seder* in the house. Even the best hotel is a joke compared to the *seder* in the house.

Everything else too should be done only according to the old customs of the Am Yisroel because our customs are the sign of our loyalty. Like it says *שָׁמַע בְּנֵי מוֹסֵר אֲבִיךָ*; that's the Torah of Hashem. *אֵל תִּטֵּשׁ תּוֹרַת אֲמֹךָ*; that's the *minhagim* of the Am Yisroel. That's called *Toras imecha*. We keep Jewish customs forever and ever.

Tradition, Tradition!

Not only *minhagim*; that's easier already. You have to set yourself free from the darkness of the world around you. You have to let loose from the media. There's no in-between. You have to do whatever you can to be loyal, to not yield at all to the ideas outside. Only Torah ideas. Only Torah ideals. Otherwise, you have the *goy* living in your head. And you can't be a successful person if you have a *goy* in your head – it doesn't matter, a Greek *goy*, an American *goy*, an Israeli *goy*; whatever it is, it's not a loyal head.

In dress too. Why should you yield? I saw a Jew, a Williamsburger Jew on Kings Highway. He has to do business here. He has a *kapote*. He has *peyos*. He's walking like he's in his *shtetl* at home. He's doing business with all kinds of people. He goes in stores and he's trying to sell them merchandise. He's not embarrassed. The world belongs to him. You see this man doesn't have any *chashash*, any fear at all of inferiority. That's a *ne'eman*. That man is loyal.

American Loyalty

Now you might think "well, it's not Americanized". People will say you're not real Americans, keeping away from American ways. I'll tell you something. In Pennsylvania there's a certain district populated by the Amish. Now the Amish dress differently, not like Americans. They wear black hats. Women wear big dresses. They use wagons more than they use cars. They have their own ways. Amish have their own ways. They're Christians but they have their own ways, very different. Very different from Americans. Did anybody ever accuse the Amish of being un-American? No.

The Amish are so different. It's remarkable how different they are. They stick to themselves. They don't mingle with other people. Nobody accuses them. So why should they accuse us? We also have a right, *lehavdil*, to have our own ways.

And therefore you could be a good loyal American. There's no *pegimah* in your loyalty if you act like a *frum* Jew and look like a *frum* Jew. And if there would be, if *chas v'shalom* there would be, it wouldn't matter to us because we're loyal to Hashem. That's why *frum* Jews are called *shelomei emunei Yisroel*, complete in their loyalty.

Loyal Forever

That's what the Chanukah light says: Be loyal! Love your G-d. You promised once. We promised and therefore we're going to keep our promise through thick and thin. That's what it says at the end of Shir HaShirim, *מִיָּם רַבִּים לֹא יוּכְלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֶת הַאֵהָבָה* – *many waters will never be able to quench that love*, *וְנְהָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטְפוּהָ* – *and rivers will not sweep it away* (Shir Hashirim 8:7). That's what we say to the outside world: "Try all you want but you won't be able to put out that fire that we kindled on Chanukah."

Some will drop off, yes. Many have fallen by the wayside. They yielded to various kinds of temptation. It's the truth; some have weakened in their loyalty. A tragedy, a tragedy. There always will be some stragglers, but through thick and thin the

Jewish nation will cling to the promise they made at Sinai until the end of time.

And that's going to be the clarion call of the *geulah*. Like it says in *Yeshaya*, פְּתוּחוּ שְׁעָרִים - *Open up the gates*. Who will come in? וְיָבֹא גוֹי צְדִיק שְׁמֹר - *The righteous nation who guarded their loyalty* (26:2). The time will come when the gates of Eretz Yisroel will open up and the Jewish nation will come again back to their homeland. Why? Because they're שְׁמֹר אֱמֻנָם, they guarded their loyalty.

Those Jews who yielded, who fell by the wayside, no. They fell in love with American civilization or with British civilization and they gave their children to the colleges instead of the *yeshivos*, no that's not loyalty. And even the *frummeh* who weaken and yield and vacillate, no, that's not *emunim*. But those Jews who learned the lesson of the Chanukah flame, the flame of loyalty, and remained faithful to their principles, to Hashem; they're the ones who will come back again and be with Him forever.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

One Minute of Flaming Loyalty

Every night, after the Chanukah menorah is lit, I will *bli neder* spend one full minute looking at the burning flames while considering that the flame represents the flame of loyalty that burns within every Jew. And I will spend that minute thinking about how I can better express that loyalty, practically, in my own life.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

148 - Chanukah I | 196 - Chanukah III | 340 - Chanukah VI | 437 - The Eternal Light | E-85 - Loyalty: The Light of Emunah | E-243 - Steadfast

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Is giving Chanukah gifts an imitation of gentile practices?



And the answer is, it certainly is. It's the season when the stores are full of good things and everybody is moved to buy. There's a great campaign to save your money for you. All the stores have big signs in the windows, 'Save!', 'Save!', 'Save!' And so as a result you start spending.

However, this has to be tempered with a little bit of mildness because the children might feel deprived. And therefore it wouldn't be amiss, it wouldn't be out of place to give some presents. But to go around with a long list, a paper a yard long, and say 'I have to do my Chanukah shopping' that's nothing but an imitation of *goyim*. You want to give gifts? So give gifts for Pesach. You can give gifts for Purim. You want to give gifts for Chanukah too? So we won't criticize that.

But to make a big fuss about it, Chanukah-giving as an ideal? So you might as well sing carols and put up a Chanukah tree. Because that's what it is.

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