



Vol.2 No. 15

27 Kislev, 5768

December 7, 2007

Parsha: Mikets, **Hanukkah**

Candle Lighting 4:29 p.m.

Havdalah 5:30 p.m.

Schedule of Events

Dec. 9 Chabad event, 3:00 p.m.: Everyone is invited to the Carving & Kindling of a Giant CHOCOLATE MENORAH at Peabody Place Entertainment & Retail Center.

Dec. 11 Field trip to Playhouse on the square, 9:00–12:00. We will be seeing a live performance of “Seussical.” We need drivers and permission slips.

Dec. 11 Save the Date! Student Hanukkah Party chocolate, games, dinner and fun.

Dec. 16 Keshet-Konnection, session 3: “The Memory of Holocaust,” Sunday, 11:00—12:45. This session will include a group workshop, and a movie followed by a discussion.

Dec 16 The Jack Belz 80th Birthday Dinner, 6:00 Peabody Hotel.

Past Week Events

On Friday we had a special Kabbalat-Shabbat and Hanukkah party with the Israeli guys in the Memphis Torah-Mitzion Kollel. They prepared a great activity, with a strong message about the relevance of Hanukkah to our days. We hope to have further activities with Torah-Mitzion of Memphis.

Todah Raba

To all the parents who got together and sent meals to the Indingaro family over the weekend.

To Rabbi Avi Kanai and the Torah-Mitzion Kollel of Memphis for the Kabbalat-Shabbat activity.

Family Riddles for Hanukkah by Parker Mantel

Check your children’s skill.

You will find the answers to the riddles at the end of the newsletter:

1. Where did the rebellion against the Syrian Greeks break out?
2. Who comes from the modern city that has the same name?
3. Who led the battles?
4. What were his brother’s names?
5. Why do we eat Latkes and Jelly Doughnuts on Hanukkah?
6. Why do we spin the dreidel on Hanukkah?
7. Why did the cow eat the dreidel?

Thought on Hanukkah

This week’s Oral Torah classes were dedicated to Hannukah. We learned the background and the story of Hanukkah, the relevant Halochot (practical laws) for Hannukah, and we tried to dive into the deeper meaning of this holiday.

One of the topics we talked about is the dispute between Beit-Shamai and Beit-Hillel (two Rabbinical parties in the early days of the Mishna).

It is well known that on the first day of Chanukah one candle is lit. On each successive night, one more is kindled. This in fact is the view of Beit-Hillel as recorded in the Talmud. (Shabbat 21b) Beit-Shamai dissents. His position is that on the first night eight candles are lit. On each successive night, one less light is kindled.

Investigating this topic the students were exposed to 2 philosophical perspectives on Jewish life, which are represented in the opinions of Beit-Shamai and Beit-Hillel in this dispute over the number of Hanukkah candles we light each night.

Yet there is another way to look at this disagreement. Rabbi Avi Wiess (Riverdale) sees Chanukah as a two dimensional miracle. On the one hand, we were victorious over the Syrian Greeks who were prepared to annihilate our religion. This miracle is spelled out in the Al Hanisim prayer (the additional prayer in the Amida). In it we say that on Chanukah God "gave the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few."

There is also the miracle of the lights. There was enough oil for one day and it miraculously lasted for eight. This miracle is alluded to in the 'Haneirot Halalu', which is recited after the candle lighting.

In one word the **Al Hanisim** celebrates the physical miracle of overcoming the Syrian Greeks. The Haneirot Halalu, the spiritual miracle of retaining our belief system even in the face of powerful assimilationist forces.

Could it be that Beit-Shammai and Beit-Hillel disagree concerning which miracle is paramount. For Beit-Shammai it was the physical military victory. Hence, the candles are lit in descending order. Such is the way of military victory. At first it looms large, all eight candles are lit. But, while physical victory is important, if it does not lead to a meaningful message, it quickly fades and diminishes in power.

Beit Hillel is of the opposite opinion. For Beit Hillel, the miracle is spiritual. The way of spirituality is to begin modestly almost unnoticed. In time, the spiritual power expands and becomes larger and larger. Hence Beit Hillel insists the candles be lit in increasing numbers - each day the power of the spirit becomes stronger and stronger.

This is an appropriate message on this Chanukah when in Israel soldiers display important physical power and do so with a sense of deep ethics. This is known in the Israeli Defense Forces as '**Tohar Haneshek**', purity of arms. In this sense, our soldiers reflect the words of Zechariah read this week: "Not by might nor by power but by My spirit says the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6) This does not mean that

might and power are not important. Indeed, some commentators understand this sentence to mean: "Not only by might nor only by power, but also by my spirit says the Lord of hosts." Power and might are crucial when infused with a spirit of God.

Riddle answers

1. Modi'in
2. Mr. Gellman
3. Yehudah
4. Shim'on, Elazar, Yonatan, Yochanan
5. To commemorate this miracle, we eat "oily" foods including fried potato pancakes called "Latkes." This custom of eating oily foods on Chanukah is at least nine hundred years old, because we find mention of this delicious custom in the writings of Rabbi Maimon, father of Maimonides.
6. The Dreidel was invented during the time of the Maccabees. Antiochus, the Syrian tyrant, forbade the study of Torah or the gathering of Jews in their synagogues. But the Jews would not forsake the Torah. So they met secretly in small groups and in hidden places and studied the Torah by heart. In that way, if one forgot a passage, another who remembered could teach it to him while a third person served as a lookout at the door. When soldiers approached, a warning was given and the group would quickly break up and disappear through back doors and secret passages. One of the tricks that was used to avoid discovery was the dreidel game. This is how it was done. The students always kept a top on the table while they were studying. If a soldier appeared before the members of the group could melt away, one of them would begin to spin the dreidel and all would pretend, enthusiastically, that they were engaging in an innocent game. The soldier had no way of proving otherwise. And so, a little Hanukkah dreidel saved the lives of many loyal and pious Jews.
7. Because there was Hei on it.

Mazal Toy

To Logan Bierman on his new Puppies, Romeo and Bella. May you have a lot of Nachas and many years of happiness with them...