



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

31st December 2016 - Volume 9 - Issue 22 - ב טבת תשע"ז

## News This Week

### Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush after Davenning sponsored by Steve Rosenbaum in honour of the first Yahrtzeit of his mother next week - Chaim Aruchim.

## Predictions Predicated on Presumptuous Propositions

Dani Epstein

Sr Winston Churchill was rarely short of a pithy quote or two; his oratory speeches were the catalyst for rousing the flagging spirits of the British public in its darkest hours. During WWII, after a series of defeats from Dunkirk to Singapore, the country was desperate for some good news - anything would do. At the Lord Mayor's Luncheon in Mansion House, on November 10th 1942, the Prime Minister finally had something to offer a public starved of good cheer.

After some prolonged battles, Generals Alexander and Montgomery had routed Rommel in El Alamein, prompting Churchill to say, inter alia: "Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning." How prophetic that proved to be, and fortunate we are to be citizens of this brave country that freed the world from such unadulterated and pernicious evil.

Politicians are wont to predict all manner of events. Brexit will happen, Brexit won't happen, oh it did, it will be the end of the UK; no, it's the best thing since we invented Marmite. Actually getting predictions correct is an art form that, however, few of them are blessed with. Occasionally they actually do predict something that turns out to be quite the reverse of what they intended. More on this later.

This little preamble might help illuminate a rather interesting fact that simply caught me entirely unaware until it was pointed out, at which point I felt rather foolish at having not realised this earlier.

There is something missing from the Chanukah version of Al Hanissim. Strange, but entirely true. No, not the fact that Eretz Yisroel was overwhelmed by pagan Syriac Greeks, that the Chashmonoim took them on in what looked like a suicidal attempt; oh no, that's all there. There is just one central event, one very important occurrence that took place which is simply missed out in its entirety.

Want a clue? Hmm, that's going to be tricky. Well, OK. How about illuminating you a little. There, that was a clue in and of itself. Still not there yet? Let's see. Don't let your ignorance dim your enthusiasm. Yet another clue. Also a potentially lethal piece of advice if you are contemplating collecting land mines as a hobby.

The answer is: the neiss of the oil. That's right, run through Al Hanissim in your mind or use a siddur, but nowhere does it mention that the lights burned for eight full days on one jug of oil instead of the expected one day.

Interesting, that.

How could that possibly be? Surely this was the most central event of the whole story, it ought to have a mention right at the start! Yet it is simply not part of that remembrance.

What is stranger yet is that the Talmud in Shabbos (21b) has a very brief account of the incident, and there the neiss of the oil garners more text than anything else, and the fighting barely gets a mention!

שכשכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברה מלכות בית

חשמונאי ונצחום בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה "When the Greeks entered the Temple, they polluted all the oils in the Temple, and when the Hasmonean dynasty overcame and defeated them, they checked and they found but one cruse of oil that was set in place with the seal of the High Priest, but there was in it only [enough] to light a single day. A miracle was done with it, and they lit from it for eight days. The following year [the Sages] fixed those [days], making them holidays for praise and thanksgiving."

Now this would imply that the most central event in the story was the oil burning for eight days. How come this does not even garner a brief mention in Al Hanissim?

We have to step back for a moment and consider various issues before we can get on to tackle this rather mysterious conundrum.

What exactly happened once the fight was over, and the Chashmonoim were about to place a menorah back in the Kodshim? What were the issues at hand? Well, first of all the original golden menorah (not the menorah of the Mishkon or the first Beis Hamikdosh, but that of the second one) had been pinched by the Syriac Greeks, so they were short of a menorah. Ok, big deal, make one. Yes, true, except that would take a ton or so of gold, which at that point was a bit of a showstopper on account of the Chashmonoim being thoroughly overdrawn and the other minor fact that making a gold menorah would take several months at least. So even if they had the gold or the cash to buy enough, they would have to do without a menorah altogether for the duration of the manufacturing process.

This not really being an option, they decided to make one out of wood. Now that's not technically a big issue vis-a-vis satisfying the requirements of having a menorah in the Kodshim, but there are one or two other issues there. First of all, one may not enter the Beis Hamikdosh whilst one is a tomei meis, that is to say one is tomei having touched a dead body or been inside a building or under a tree which contained one, and at that stage everyone was tomei.

## The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת מקץ	שבת חנוכה
Candle Lighting	3.43pm
Mincha	3.48pm
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.18am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Shiur	3.08pm
2nd Mincha	3.38pm
Seuda Shlishis	Following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	4.58pm
Ovos uBonim	6.28pm
Sun / Mon	7.10am / 8.10am / 9.30am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	3.50pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

On the other hand, there is a principle of **טומאה הותרה בציבור**, that in a situation where the entire nation is *tomei*, the prohibitions associated with *tumoh* are lifted. This is in fact what the *Pnei Yehoshua* asks: if everyone was *tomei*, why didn't they light the menorah with *tomei* oil? He answers that the menorah represents a testament of Hashem's love and endearment of *Klal Yisroel*, and that His *shechinoh* resides within *Klal Yisroel*, as attested to in *maseches Shabbos* (22b):

אלא עדות היא לבאי עולם שהשכינה שורה בישראל. מאי עדות? אמר רב: זו נר מערבי, שנותן בה שמן כמידת חברותיה, וממנה היה מדליק ובה היה מסיים "...it is a testament to all comers that the *Shechinoh* resides within *Yisroel*. What is this testament? Says Rav: this is the western lamp, in which was poured a similar amount as the other lamps, from which the others were lit and it was the final lamp."

That is to say, it burned far longer than the other lamps, to the degree that the other lamps were all lit from the western one, and then presumably that one was extinguished, a fresh wick was inserted and then refilled and re-lit.

Now, even given this principle of **טומאה הותרה בציבור**, the *Chashmonoim* nonetheless desired to light the menorah with *tohoir* oil due to its symbolism of our connection with Hashem and were overjoyed when they found one sealed jug (earthenware does not acquire *tumoh* through touching its exterior).

There is, however, a tricky problem to deal with now. What would be the point of lighting a menorah with *tohoir* oil when the menorah itself would be *tomei*? After all, if the *Chashmonoim* were *tomei*, anything they would fabricate would acquire this *tumoh*.

A solution proffered by many is that they used simple wooden sticks, known as **פשוטי כלי עץ** in halachic parlance. This explanation suffers from two problems. First of all, assuming they actually did use **פשוטי כלי עץ**, once they poured the oil in and lit it, the menorah would acquire *tumoh* nonetheless. Secondly, even given this principle of **פשוטי כלי עץ**, this applies only to wooden sticks that do not have any form of receptacle. So, while wooden knives and forks cannot receive *tumoh*, wooden spoons can. A menorah, by definition, would require some kind of hollow to accept the oil, in which case we no longer have **פשוטי כלי עץ** and the menorah would be *tomei*, rendering the *tohoir* jug of oil pointless.

The *Chiddushei Aggodos* (*Shabbos* 21b) mulls this whole problem at length. He takes the position that **טומאה הותרה בציבור** would not have allowed the *Chashmonoim* to enter the *Beis Hamikdosh* whilst they were *tomei* and postulates that there were some *cohanim* who were not *tomei*, and they were the ones who lit the menorah. This does not resolve a yet further issue in that how did they fabricate a menorah in a matter of hours, wood or not. After all, *Black and Decker* were hardly in business at that point. As it is, whoever fabricated this menorah would impart *tumoh* to it, and for some reason the *Chiddushei Aggodos* assumes that the *tohoir* *cohanim* were not the ones who made the menorah.

He resolves this by suggesting that someone had pre-fabricated such a wooden menorah a while before for whatever reason, which they then appropriated for the *Beis Hamikdosh* and carried it there using **פשוטי כלי עץ** thus preventing the menorah from becoming *tomei*. All fine and dandy, but how could that fellow have fabricated a seven branched menorah in the first place- this is in itself an issue?

Even given all this, *Megillas Taanis* states that they covered seven iron spits with wood (or zinc) which kind of blows all of this out of the water.

All in all, one can see that there are many halachic issues surrounding this element of the Chanukah event that have to be resolved, and it's not really clear just how this whole incident took place.

At this point you will be forgiven for wondering exactly why I am perambulating through a topic that appears to be thoroughly unrelated to the matter at hand, but there is in fact a reason for all this. You have to bear in mind what the situation was at the time. Many Jews had unfortunately succumbed to the blandishments of the Hellenists and had discarded their ancient faith for the Olympics, theatres and culture that the Syriac Greeks had ensnared them with. They were hardly the cheerleaders for the *Chashmonoim* and their supporters, who were much fewer in number.

Who cleaned up the *Beis Hamikdosh*? Who scoured the complex for oil? Who was concerned with the complexities of finding or making a menorah? It was the faithful few, not the Hellenist masses.

Who would have seen the menorah being lit and burning for eight days? Only those permitted into the *Kodshim* of *Beis Hamikdosh*, which at most would have been only the *cohanim*, and perhaps in this case only a minority thereof. They would have been the ones to report the miracle of the menorah to the masses, and the populace would have had to rely on their reports to believe the miracle actually took place, which is a bit of a tough one given their endearment with the Hellenistic and pagan culture. It would have been quite a sell.

The wars, on the other hand, were on the front page of every newspaper. There was no missing that. Everyone was quite aware that a herculean victory had been won by the small army of the faithful against the most powerful army of the civilised world. That was something no-one could deny.

Rabbi Yehudah Tuvia Guttentag takes all of this into account and much more when he postulates the entire Chanukah incident, and more importantly the missing miracle in *Al Hanissim*.

Once the fight was over and the menorah had been lit, the *Chashmonoim* were faced with a problem. On the one hand, they wanted to establish a festival with Hallel and thanksgiving for the whole Chanukah story, but in particular for the menorah miracle which was the highlight of the victory. On the other hand, one does not say Hallel for miracles that are clothed in natural-looking events (he quotes as an example the victory of *Devorah* and *Barak* over *Sisera*, for which we do not have a *chag*). As it is, the populace would hardly be inclined to accept the testament of a few *cohanim* that a miracle occurred, and even if they did it would have hardly made an impression. We as a nation are not really all that impressed by miracles, as the *Rambam* testifies that *Klal Yisroel* only really believed in *Moshe Rabeinu* at *Har Sinai* when they heard the Voice of Hashem. Exactly what would the *chag* be based on? The wars? No hallel for that. The miracle of the oil? Who would believe them?

After some deliberation they decided to take a unique approach, and simply established Chanukah with no specific reason mentioned, which has its basis in the following statement (*Avodoh Zoroh* 35a):

דאמר עולא כי גזרי גזירתא במערבא לא מגלו טעמא עד תריסר ירחי שתא דלמא ...since Ulla said when they declared a decree in the west (i.e. *Eretz Yisroel*) they did not reveal its reason for twelve months in case there were individuals who would not comprehend it and belittle it."

Those who understood what had taken place in the *Beis Hamikdosh* and were familiar with the *halocho* realised they were saying Hallel for the miracle of the oil, but the ignorant masses laboured under the impression that it was all about the wars - hence the low profile of the miracle of the oil and its omission in *Al Hanissim*.

Now, let us return to our dearly beloved politicians. In 2009 the then Israeli Prime minister visited various cities that were badly affected by Hamas shelling. In wanting to reassure them, he said thusly:

"I cannot help but comment on events currently taking place in the south of the country. I would like to tell you that our - the Government of Israel's - goal is that *Ashkelon*, *Gabim*, *Sderot* and *Nahal Oz* will be able to live in the same quiet that the residents of *Paris* and *Marseilles* live in."

Of all the cities of Europe he could have picked - and there are quite a lot of them - he picked the two that a scant few years later were rocketed by heinous terrorist attacks! How absurdly inverted this near-prophecy has come to prove!

*Olmert* put all his faith in the might of the *IDF* and absolutely none in Hashem, and that turned round to bite him. The *Chashmonoim* had every reason to believe in their tactical prowess, since no overt miracles occurred in battle, and yet the only force driving them was their absolute and unadulterated faith in Hashem. Today we can see what a miracle in itself that was, since despite all the near-misses *Israel* has suffered, their politicians are entrenched in secularism, and the *Chashmonoim* who were surrounded by Hellenist and pagan influences kept themselves faithful despite all the odds. This really is a far greater *neiss* than the battles and the oil and in and of itself deserves Hallel and thanksgiving.