

JOY ON CHANUKAH

CHANUKAH

PURIM

MIRACLE OF THE OIL / MIRACLE OF THE WAR / PURIM MIRACLE
OBLIGATION FOR JOY

לע"נ זאב ארי' ע"ה בן יבלחסי"א שניאור זלמן גליק

There are two opinions in the Rishonim about the days of Chanukah:

The Maharam of Rothenberg¹ holds that the festive meals we eat on Chanukah are not Seudos Mitzvah, unlike the meals on other Yamim Tovim, rather they are Seudos Reshus. This is because the days of Chanukah were never instituted as “days of joy,” only “days of thanks and praise” to Hashem.

The Mordechai² and others³, disagree and hold that the days of Chanukah were instituted as “days of joy,” just like other Yamim Tovim, and therefore there is a chiyuv to eat seudos on Chanukah.

The Rambam also holds that the days of Chanukah have a chiyuv of joy, as he writes, “These days, that start on the 25th of Kislev are days of joy and praise.”⁴

Seemingly the difference between the two opinions is based on which miracle Chanukah is in commemoration of.⁵ The Maharam holds that the entire Yomtov was instituted because of the miracle of the oil, and since the miracle was mainly a spiritual one, the commemoration is also mainly spiritual.

The source for this is in the Gemara,⁶ where it is asked: “What is Chanukah?” I.e., why was it instituted? The Gemara answers, “We

1. *Brought in the Tur*, 670.

2. *Mordechai Ha'aroch, Pesachim*, 605.

3. *Tosfos on Taanis*, 18b, and *Rashba in his Shu"t* vol, 1, 699.

4. *Hilchos Chanukah*, 3:3.

5. See *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 10, *Chanukah*.

6. *Shabbos*, 21b.

were taught ‘...When the Chashmonaim won, they entered the Heichal and could only find a small jar of pure oil with which to inaugurate the Menorah. Hashem made a ness and the oil lasted eight days. The next year they instituted the eight days for praise and thanksgiving.’”

The other Rishonim hold that the Yomtov is also because of the physical miracle of the victory of the Chashmonaim, and therefore we celebrate in a physical way as well, with festive meals.

We have a question on this, though, as the Gemara clearly says that Chanukah was instituted because of the miracle of the oil. We could explain that when the Gemara asks, “What is Chanukah?” it means why was Chanukah designated as days of praise and giving thanks, not why there is a Yomtov of Chanukah, which is because of the victory of the Chashmonaim over the Greeks.

2 Based on this we can understand another argument regarding Chanukah:

The Rambam⁷ holds that the victory of the Chashmonaim was on the 25th of Kislev, and the Meiri⁸ holds that it was on the 24th. We can say that since the Rambam holds that the Yomtov is for the victory, therefore he would say that the victory was on the same day that the Yomtov is. However, the Meiri, who holds like the Maharam, that the Yomtov is for the miracle of the oil, which happened after the miracle of the victory, would have to say that the victory was on the 24th, and the miracle of the oil, which is what Chanukah commemorates, was on the 25th.

7. *Hilchos Chanukah, ibid., 2.*

8. *Shabbos, 21b.*

However, we see by Purim that the miracle happened on the 13th of Adar, and the Yomtov was designated on the day after, on the 14th, when the Jews rested from the war. If so, why does the Rambam hold that the Yomtov was set on the same day that the miracle happened, the victory on the 25th of Kislev?

3 We therefore have to say that according to the Rambam there is a difference between Chanukah and Purim, but to understand that, we first have to understand something in the opinion of the Meiri and the Maharam: Why indeed was the Yomtov of Chanukah not instituted in honor of the miracle of the war-victory?

The answer is, that they hold that the entire victory was only in order for there to later be the miracle of the oil, but by Purim the main miracle was that the decree was foiled and the Jews were saved, and therefore the days of Purim are “days of feasting and rejoicing.” The other Meforshim hold that the victory itself was a main part of the miracle of Chanukah.

The Rambam holds even further, that the miracle of Chanukah is greater than the miracle of Purim. By Purim the main thing was not the victory over the enemies, but the fact that the Jews were no longer under threat. This was especially so because there were no open miracles, so they couldn’t celebrate the victory itself. Therefore they celebrated on the day after, when they were able to rest and relax from the war. However by Chanukah, the victory itself was in a miraculous manner, the strong in the hands of the weak, etc. and they therefore celebrated the victory itself, on the day of the victory.

4 The lesson from this in our Avodah is: The victory of the war is a miracle of Sur Mera, avoiding the negative, and the miracle of the oil is from the revelation of Elokus, which is connected to Aseh Tov, doing good. One might think that because the main part of Chanukah is the Aseh Tov, the Sur Mera isn't so important.

We learn, however, that the Yomtov of Chanukah was also instituted for the miracle of the victory, and the Sur Mera is also essential, and we fulfill Hashem's will with Sur Mera just as much as with Aseh Tov.

STUDY AID

1. The argument about what Chanukah is, only praise or joy as well.
2. How we could potentially use this to explain the disagreement about the date of the miracle, and why we can't.
3. The difference between the miracles of Chanukah and Purim, and how we can use this to explain our machlokes.
4. The lesson for us, about Sur Mera.

Source:

על פי ליקוטי שיחות חלק ל' חנוכה שיחה א'