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NOTE FROM THE RABBI



Dear Friend,

Looking at the events today, you start to wonder. The story of a little candle pushing away the monster of frightening darkness, of human sensibility overcoming terror and brute force, of life and growth overcoming destruction the battle is very much alive within each of us, and in the world outside of us.

It reoccurs at every winter solstice, at every dawn of each day, with every photon of sunlight that breaks through the earth's atmosphere bringing it warmth and life-nurturing energy. With every breath of life, every cry of a newborn child, every blade of grass that breaks out from under the soil, every decision to do good in the face of evil, to be kind where there is cruelty, to build where others destroy, to move humanity forward when others pull us toward chaos. And that is Chanukah.

Chanukah is an eight-day spiritual journey. Many people know the story of Chanukah but only as a historical pretext to give gifts and eat latkes. We can call that the body of Chanukah. The soul of Chanukah is its meditation, joy, warmth and light. Not only in our homes with our loved ones, but with the entire world. In this tradition, Chabad presents this historic Menorah Lighting.

Our hope is that by igniting our souls, everybody will follow and light the world, one candle at a time. We look forward to having you join us at any of our Public Menorah Lightings and other Chanukah events. For a full Chanukah schedule see page 15, or visit www.chanukahlv.com.

Wishing you a safe and warm winter and a happy Chanukah,

Rabbi Yaacov Halperin

P.S Please take a moment to send your tax deductible contribution in the enclosed envelope to help us continue our vital work of social services and educational programs.

Wellsprings Magazine



*Dedicated to
the Love and
Inspiration
of the
Lubavitcher
Rebbe
OB"M*



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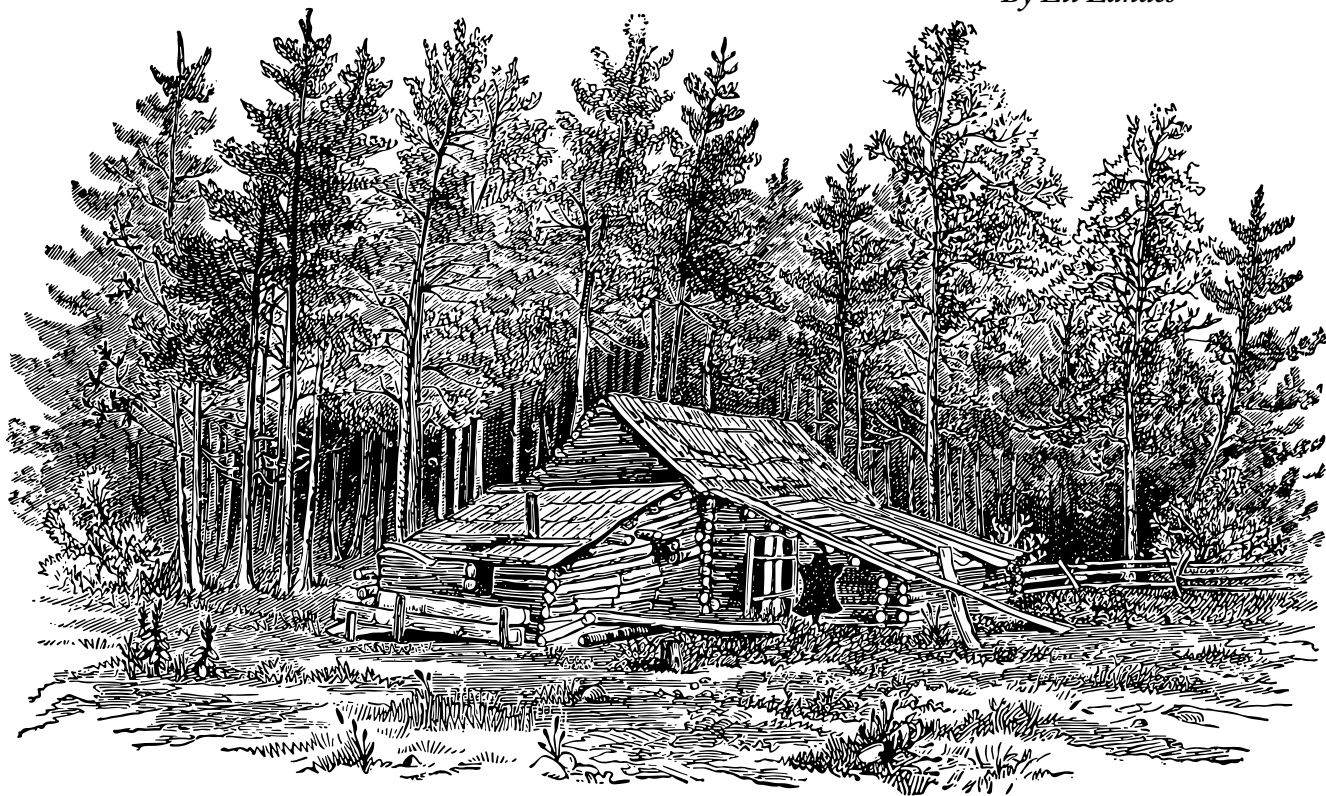
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THE

Monster

IN THE WOODS

By Eli Landes



Somewhere in Russia, mid-19th century . . .

I trudge slowly through the dark forest, huddled deep in my coat in vain pursuit of its meager protection. The heavy rain and howling winds slam into me, threatening to toss me from the dirt path and worming the cold insidiously into my bones. I stumble on, squinting through the dark to see the dim path ahead of me, wishing I was home, wishing I was anywhere but here.

Here to visit the Monster of the Woods.

As I near my destination, I become less and less aware of the rain and wind, their importance paling beside the fear bubbling inside me. I've grown up on tales of the Monster of the Woods, of his evilness, of the horrors that befall those who anger him. It's madness to willingly go to him, but I have no choice. I need his help.

After what seems like an eternity, I reach a small clearing. A tiny hut stands in the middle of it, barely visible in the

gloom. Soaked to the bone with rain and exhaustion, I walk to the hut, my legs propelling me forward. As I near, I start to hear the thump-thump-thumping of my heart, its steady beat carrying over the shriek of the winds. I can taste my dread, sick and acrid against my tongue, and my hands tremble with fright.

Then, almost without realizing it, I find myself by the door.

I take a breath—a shaking, shuddering breath—and raise my hand to knock.

I have to knock a few times, hard and loud, before I hear movement in the hut. There is the creak of a chair, the sound of something—a pot, maybe?—crashing to the ground, and then footsteps slowly approaching the door. With a dry groan, the door swings open.

The old Jew peers up at me, squinting against the rain that swirls around me. He is bent and grizzled, this Monster of the Woods, but I can see that his eyes are bright, cunning and

shrewd, reflecting the evil of his race.

“Yes? Can I help you?”

I swallow. I need this Jew, need what he knows, but I am still afraid, and my words tumble over each other, coming out wrong and befuddled. “Medicine. I need medicine. I mean, my father does. He’s sick, you see, and the doctors don’t know how to help him. And you do. That is, I heard that you know medicines—herbs and such? And that I can describe the illness to you and you can cure it? I have money, too. To pay. For the medicine.”

The Jew nods. “Well. You’d better come in, then.” He turns around and enters his home.

I swallow. I don’t want to enter the Monster’s house—a thousand stories detail the folly in such an action—but what can I do? He’s already walked into his house. Plus, I’m cold, so cold I’ve forgotten what warm feels like, and in the corner of the hut I can see a fire.

Sighing, I enter, shrugging out of my coat and laying it over a stool. I hurry over to the fire, crouching low and letting out a satisfied sigh as its heat spreads over me. The Jew walks over and hands me a cup of hot water, which I slowly sip.

“Do you know why they call me a monster?”

He sits down on a stool across from me. “So. Start from the beginning. Describe your father’s illness.”

I do, having made sure to memorize every detail of it. When I’m done, the Jew cocks his head and looks at me inquisitively.

“You’re Boris, right? Igor’s son?”

I feel a stab of terror pierce my heart. “What of it?” I slowly bend my knees, so I can jump up if I have to run.

“What of it?” The Jew shrugs. “Nothing. I remember you, is all. I used to live in the town, years ago. Before they realized the gold mine in their midst—before they realized that they could blame any vices they have on the ‘evil Jews’ and avoid having to take responsibility for them. Anyway, back then, I used to see you around, sometimes. You’re taller now, but I recognize you.”

For the first time, my fear is overpowered by my anger. “Oh, that’s clever. Pretending that you’re the victim. I know what you are; everyone does. You’re the Monster of the Woods.”

The Jew smiles, an odd, sad smile, and for a moment I catch a glimpse of an immeasurable grief and pain in that smile. “Ah, yes. How could I forget? I am the terrible Monster, tricking his visitors and stealing their wealth.” He spreads his arms wide. “Can you not see it—the gold and silver lining my walls? This beautiful throne of diamonds I sit on? Look how majestically I live. Yes, I must be a terrible bandit—a monster, indeed.”

“Well, of course you don’t show it. If you lived in splendor, you wouldn’t be able to rob people. You need to appear poor to get them off their guard. When I leave, I’m sure you’ll revert to your true form.”

“Ah, yes. That is clearly the most logical explanation.” He applauds, slowly. “Well done, Boris, son of Igor. You have seen to the heart of my nature.”

I scowl, at him, angry at being mocked, and open my mouth to argue. Before I can speak, he wearily raises a hand. “No, don’t. I’m not interested in arguing with you.” He stands, walks to a trunk by the wall and starts pulling out herbs. As he sorts through them, he speaks over his shoulder. “Do you know why they call me a monster? It’s not because I’m dangerous or particularly frightening. No, I’m a monster because I’m something far worse. I’m different.”



He turns from the wall and walks towards me with a satchel. “Here—the medicine for your father. I’ve included instructions as to how he should take them. If he follows them, he should heal properly.”

I take them wordlessly and stand to leave. As I reach the door, I turn back to face him. “If it’s so hard for you, why don’t you be like everyone else?”

“And what would be the point, then?”

The odd Monster smiled. “How was the trek on the way here?”

“Difficult. I could barely see the path, and the winds kept trying to blow me off the path into the woods.”

He nodded. “You could have just walked off into the forest. Abandoned the path, stopped struggling through the winds and given up. The trees would have sheltered you; you would have had no need for light without a path. But you didn’t. Because you’d never have found your way here without the path to guide you.

“I could give it up. Live in the forest, be comfortable in this world. But then I’d have to give up my path, my difficult path through the forest. And what would be the point, then? What’s the point of entering the forest if you won’t walk the right path?”

Eli Landes is a marketing copywriter by day and a fiction writer whenever he can squeeze in the time. He writes Jewish fiction and has been known to dabble in the weird, the absurd, and the truly dark. He lives in New York where he’s working on his first novel.

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Chanukah

GUIDE

5779





THE MENORAH

The basic elements of a kosher menorah are eight holders for oil or candles and an additional holder, set apart from the rest, for the shamash (“attendant”) candle.

The Chanukah lights can either be candle flames or oil-fueled. Since the miracle of Chanukah happened with olive oil – the little cruse of oil that lasted for eight days – an oil menorah is preferable to a candle one, and olive oil is the ideal fuel. Cotton wicks are preferred because of the smooth flame they produce.

The eight candles of the menorah must be arranged in a straight, even line. If it is an oil menorah, the oil cups should hold enough oil to burn for the required time – at least 30 minutes on weeknights, and up to one-and-a-half hours on Friday evening. If it is a candle menorah, the candles should be large enough to burn for the required time.

Electric menorahs are great for display purposes, and are a wonderful medium for publicizing the Chanukah miracle. But the Chanukah lights used to fulfill the mitzvah should be real flames fueled by wax or oil – like the flames in the Holy Temple.

WHO

Men, women, and children should participate in the menorah lighting. In some families, the head of the household lights the family menorah while everyone else listens to the blessings and answers, “Amen.” In many other families, all members of the household, including children, light their own menorahs.





FOOD

Chanukah commemorates an oil-based miracle—which explains why we eat oily foods to commemorate it. Some eat fried potato pancakes, a.k.a. latkes, while others eat sufganiyot—deep-fried doughnuts. Some eat both. Most survive the holiday.

Yes, food can be dangerous. One of the greatest Maccabee victories was the result of feeding the enemy cheese—so we also eat dairy foods on Chanukah. Again, we survive. For more details on the role of cheese in the Chanukah story, see page

CHAG URIM

SAMEACH

SHABBAT CHANUKAH

On Friday afternoon, light the menorah before lighting the Shabbat candles. The Friday night Chanukah candles must burn for at least 1½ hours—so you may need more oil or larger candles. On Saturday night, light the menorah after dark, and after the Havdalah ceremony.

GELT

During Chanukah it is customary to give gelt (money) to children, so that we can teach them to give some of it to charity—and just to keep things festive and happy. Some have the admirable custom of gelt-giving each weeknight of Chanukah. They survive this, too.

DREIDELS

The Greek oppressors outlawed Torah schools, so the children would study in the forests, posting sentries to alert them of Greek patrols. When the alert came, the children would hide their texts and start playing with dreidels (spinning tops).

We, too, play dreidel games on Chanukah to commemorate the courage of these heroic children. The four Hebrew letters on the dreidel are an acronym for “Nes Gadol Hayah Sham”—a great miracle happened there. So playing dreidel keeps us mindful of the Chanukah miracles even during fun and games.

HAPPY FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



Chanukah -- the eight-day festival of light that begins on the eve of the 25th of the Jewish month of Kislev -- celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, of purity over adulteration, of spirituality over materiality.

More than twenty-one centuries ago, the Holy Land was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks) Antiochus IV began to reign over Syria (in 3586 - 174 B.C.E.). He was a tyrant of a rash and impetuous nature, contemptuous of religion and of the feelings of others.

Desiring to unify his kingdom through the medium of a common religion and culture, Antiochus tried to root out the individualism of the Jews by suppressing all the Jewish Laws.

Antiochus then enacted a series of harsh decrees against the Jews. Jewish worship was forbidden; the scrolls of the Law were confiscated and burned. Sabbath rest, circumcision and the dietary laws were prohibited under penalty of death. Even one of the respected elders of that generation, Rabbi Eliezer, a man of 90, was ordered by the servants of Antiochus to eat pork so that others would do the same. When he refused they suggested to

him that he pick up the meat to his lips to appear to be eating. But Rabbi Eliezer refused to do even that and was put to death.

One day the henchmen of Antiochus arrived in the village of Modiin where Mattityahu, the old priest, lived. The Syrian officer built an altar in the marketplace of the village and demanded that Mattityahu offer sacrifices to the Greek gods. Mattityahu replied, "I, my sons and my brothers are determined to remain loyal to the covenant which our G-d made with our ancestors!"

Thereupon, a Hellenistic Jew approached the altar to offer a sacrifice. Mattityahu grabbed his sword and killed him, and his sons and friends fell upon the Syrian officers and men. They killed many of them and chased the rest away. They then destroyed the altar.

Mattityahu knew that Antiochus would be enraged when he heard what had happened. He would certainly send an expedition to punish him and his followers. Mattityahu, therefore, left the village of Modiin and fled together with his sons and friends to the hills of Judea.

All loyal and courageous Jews joined them. They formed legions and from time to time they left their hiding places to fall upon enemy detachments and outposts, and to destroy the pagan altars that were built by order of Antiochus.

Before his death, Mattityahu called his sons together and urged them to continue to fight in defense of G-d's Torah. In waging warfare, he said, their leader should be Judah the Strong.

Judah was called "Maccabee," a word composed of the initial letters of the four Hebrew words Mi Kamo-cha Ba'eilim Hashem, "Who is like You, O G-d."

An army consisting of more than 40,000 men swept the land. When Judah and his brothers heard of that, they exclaimed: "Let us fight unto death in defense of our souls and our Temple!" The people assembled in Mitzpah, where Samuel, the prophet of old, had offered prayers to G-d. After a series of battles the war was won.

The Dedication

Now the Maccabees returned to Jerusalem to liberate it. They entered the Temple and cleared it of the idols placed there by the Syrian vandals. Judah and his followers built a new altar, which he dedicated on the twenty-fifth of the month of Kislev, in the year 3622 (139 B.C.E.).

Since the golden Menorah had been stolen by the Syrians, the Maccabees now made one of cheaper metal. When they wanted

to light it, they found only a small cruse of pure olive oil bearing the seal of the High Priest Yochanan. It was sufficient to light only for one day. By a miracle of G-d, it continued to burn for eight days, till new oil was made available. That miracle proved that G-d had again taken His people under His protection. In memory of this, our sages appointed these eight days for annual thanksgiving and for lighting candles.

IT WAS SUFFICIENT TO LIGHT ONLY FOR ONE DAY.



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“JUDEA WAS AGAIN FREE”

Once this most important task was accomplished, Judah Maccabi led his freshly trained troops to the aid of the regions and villages harassed by the spiteful neighbors of Judea. He drove the Idumeans from Hebron, which they had annexed, and he punished the people who had acted with hostility towards the Jewish settlers. Then he led his army across the Jordan River against the Ammonites. Their capital fell before the furious onslaught of the Jewish troops, and so did their fortress, Yaeser. Judah's brother Shimon led an army north to aid the plagued Jews of Galilee. He defeated the enemy and cleared the Jewish land. At his urging, a great many of the Jewish settlers who had fled to Jerusalem, returned to rebuild in safety what had been destroyed during the years of weakness. Judah Maccabi and Yonatan joined forces and marched against Gilead, where they were met with the toughest resistance. By Shavuot, this campaign was successfully concluded.

Judea was again free, and all parts captured by the neighboring nation had been recovered. Celebrations and festivity transformed Jerusalem and the Holy Temple, hardly half a year after the victories over the Syrian armies. The Jewish people expressed their joy and gratitude to G-d in the form of psalms and offerings. For He had restored glory and liberty to the Jewish land.

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HOW TO LIGHT THE MENORAH

1. Arrange the lights on the menorah. Ensure that there is enough oil, or that the candles are big enough, for the lights to burn until half an hour after nightfall (or, if lighting after nightfall, for one half hour). On the first night, set one candle to the far right of the menorah. On the following night, add a second light to the left of the first one, and then add one light each night of Chanukah - moving from right to left.
2. Gather everyone in the house around the menorah.
3. Light the shamash candle. Then hold it in your right hand (unless you are left-handed).
4. While standing, recite the appropriate blessings. Light the candles. Each night, light the newest (left-most) candle first and continue lighting from left to right. (We add lights to the menorah from right to left, while we light from left to right.)



THE BLESSINGS

Before lighting the Chanukah candles, we thank G-d for giving us this special mitzvah, and for the incredible Chanukah miracles:

Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech ha-ol-am a-she-ki-de-sha-nu be-mitz-vo-tav ve-tzi-va-nu le-had-lik ner Chanukah.

Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ha-ol-am she-a-sa ni-sim la-avo-te-nu ba-ya-mim ha-hem bi-z'man ha-zeh.

[Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time.]

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וציוונו להדליק נר של חנוכה
"ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה"

On the first night of Chanukah, (or the first time on Chanukah you perform this mitzvah), add the following blessing:

Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech ha-olam she-heche-ya-nu ve-ki-yi-ma-nu ve-higi-a-nu liz-man ha-zeh.

[Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.]

"ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו
הגיענו לזמן הזה."

Chanukah 5779 Begins Sunday Night, December 2nd, and concludes December 10th.

In the home, there are two preferred locations for the menorah.

You can set up the menorah in a central doorway. Place it on a chair or small table near the doorpost that is opposite the mezuzah. This way, when you pass through the doorway, you are surrounded by two mitzvot - the mezuzah and the menorah. Or you can set up your menorah on a windowsill facing the street. This option should only be exercised if the window is less than thirty feet above ground-level.

A poster for a Grand Chanukah Menorah Lighting event. It features a large, lit menorah on the left side. The background is dark blue with falling snow. The text is arranged in a list format, with each event location and date in a blue box. The overall theme is winter and light.

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INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup solid shortening
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- 2 tsps. baking powder
 - 4 eggs
- 2 tsps. vanilla extract
 - 4 cups flour
 - 1/4 tsp. salt
- 4 ounces bittersweet chocolate
- powdered sugar or coconut flakes

Devorah's RECIPE CORNER Chocolate CHANUKAH SNOWBALLS

Yields 5 dozen cookies.

In a large mixing bowl, mix shortening and sugar into a cream. Add eggs, one at a time. Beat well. Add baking powder, vanilla, and salt. Mix well. Beat in flour and chocolate.

Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 375.

Grease cookie sheet.

Form dough into balls, using 1 tsp of dough for each. Pour confectioners sugar or coconut flakes into a separate bowl and roll balls until covered.

Place on cookie sheet 3 inches apart.

Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Remove and cool.

How the Gulag Judge Lit the Menorah



Repeatedly arrested for his “counter-revolutionary” activities to preserve the flickering flame of Judaism in the Soviet Union, Reb Mordechai Chanzin frequently found himself behind bars. His first sentence amounted to 10 years in a forced-labor camp. After his release, Reb Mordechai was again found guilty and punished with five more years. His third and final sentence resulted in six years. Overall, between the years 1935 and 1956, he spent 21 years in Soviet prisons and camps. In his short stints of freedom he selflessly devoted himself to preserving Judaism behind the Iron Curtain.

the hardy crew crowded around their makeshift menorah and listened to Reb Mordechai’s emotional voice as he recited the first blessings, tears trickling down his cheeks. Reb Mordechai and his comrades gazed silently at the small yellow light, each one recalling Chanukah in his parents’ home.

The loud crash of the door opening shattered the men’s reverie. Camp guards rushed through the doorway and flooded the cramped space. The Jewish inmates were grabbed by brutish hands and shoved through the camp. When they reached a small dank cell, they were ordered to pile inside.

“By lighting the candles, you intended to signal to enemy forces.”

Among his many experiences, there was one story that he would tell again and again:

As the Siberian winter deepened, Chanukah came, and a group of young Jewish men, all prisoners of the Gulag, convened for a short meeting. The topic: how to obtain and light a secret menorah. One promised to supply margarine to be used as fuel. Some frayed threads from standard-issue camp garb would suffice as wicks. Even small cups to hold the margarine were procured from somewhere. Of course, all this was against camp regulations, and they all understood the implication of their actions should they be caught.

Reb Mordechai was the eldest of the group of 18 men, and was therefore honored to usher in the holiday by lighting of the first candle. In the dead of night, in a small garden shed,

The first to be brought to trial was the ringleader, Reb Mordechai. Inside the small courtroom, which consisted of the judge’s desk and a bench for the defendant, the proceedings were all but pro forma. Reb Mordechai had already predicted his indictment, and solemnly awaited the verdict.

“This is an act of treason,” said the prosecutor. “By lighting the candles, you intended to signal to enemy forces. The penalty for this is death.”

The judge regarded the young man standing in front of him. “Do you have anything to say for yourself?”

Reb Mordechai’s heart pounded in his chest as he approached the judge. “Is it just me, or is it the rest of the group too?”



“All of you,” enunciated the judge dryly.

Reb Mordechai was devastated.

The courtroom began to spin around him. Whatever indifference he was able to afford until then vanished in the terror-stricken realization that his fellow brothers would be led to their deaths. He blamed himself.

Reb Mordechai burst into bitter tears, and for a few minutes he stood in front of the judge, sobbing uncontrollably. Years of crushing pain and pent-up emotions overwhelmed him and couldn't be stopped.

“Come close,” said the judge.

Reb Mordechai took a step towards the judge's desk. Softly, the judge asked about his relatives, their means of livelihood and other personal details. Reb Mordechai answered the judge's inquires.

“What do you have to say for yourself?” the judge pressed on.

Mustering temerity he did not feel, Reb Mordechai addressed the judge, “We are Jews, and we lit the candles that night to observe the holiday of Chanukah.”

“You lit Chanukah candles? You lit Chanukah candles?” the judge repeated to himself, clearly unsettled. “You don't say . . . Chanukah candles.”

Recomposing himself, the judge called to the two guards present in the courtroom and asked them to stand outside. When the door clicked closed, the judge turned his attention back to Reb Mordechai.

“If you lit Chanukah candles, let me demonstrate the right way to light them.”

Reb Mordechai watched the judge light a small lamp. Picking up the incriminating documents gingerly, with trembling hands, the judge slid the first one off and held it to the flame. The paper caught fire and disappeared quickly in an orange blaze and a few wisps of smoke. As if he were afraid to delay lest he change his mind, the judge worked quickly through the pile, saying “You see? This is how you light Chanukah candles.” Soon there was nothing remaining of the pile.

Finished, the judge scooped up the scattered ashes, strode over to the window and tossed them into the Siberian wind. Sitting down, the judge reached for the buzzer on his table and summoned the guards.

“Take this group of 18 men,” the judge barked, “and separate them, making sure that it would be impossible for them to see one another. There's no point in killing them; they are not worth even one bullet.”

The guards marched out, and Reb Mordechai was again left alone with the judge. The latter faced Reb Mordechai and said in a trembling voice, “I too am a Jew, and I beg you to make sure that the future generations of our people will know to light the Chanukah candles.”

In 1956, a few years following Stalin's death, hundreds of thousands of prisoners were pardoned and their names cleared. Among them was Reb Mordechai Chanzin, who was finally given permission to leave the camps that had robbed him of decades of life. Chanzin moved to Moscow, where he became secretary to Chief Rabbi Yehudah Leib Levin. A decade later, through the efforts of the Rebbe, he was allowed to immigrate to Israel, where he was reunited with his brother Dovid, the rabbi of Petach Tikva.

(Adapted from Sichat Hashavua, no. 1248, and Sippur Shel Chag, p. 38.)

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Question:

It's hard for me to get into Chanukah. As far as I can see, the whole thing was a major disaster. Here we have a meeting of two rich cultures, with so much to share, so much to contribute to the world together, so much synergy that could happen, and instead, BOOM! — the extremists of both sides hit the battlefield.

I don't get it. The Greeks were universalists. They were open to new ideas from wherever they came. They spread knowledge and understanding throughout the Mediterranean. Here was an opportunity to take Jewish values to the world, to go public. Why couldn't those Maccabee hotheads work out some sort of compromise?

WHY COULDN'T THE *Jews* AND THE *Ancient Greeks* **JUST GET ALONG?**

By Rabbi Tzvi Freeman

The Short Answer:

Actually, this was the greatest thing that could have happened to the Greek mind: To discover that one thing it could not tolerate — something like the massage therapist who helps you to find that one trigger point where you can't be touched.

For the Jew, as well, this was a defining experience. The red lines became clear, and with those guidelines, the essential Torah was made able to survive to this day.

The Long Answer:

You're right about one thing: The whole Chanukah story was completely out of character for Ancient Greece. I don't believe there was any other culture they ever oppressed or forbade. Every new culture had its set of gods and rituals, and that was just great. "Hey, you got gods? We got gods, too! Here, let's trade god cards! How 'bout mix and match? You got rituals? You got belief-systems? We're into all that stuff! We'll even help you make big, pretty statues!" Greeks were great syncretists — meaning, they could jerry together every culture of the known world and make one big tzimmes out of all of it.

So what on earth did they have against the Jews?

Sure, there were political power-plays going on that were the ostensible reasons for the conflict. But it's obvious there was something deeper at play. Some subliminal annoyance that brought out the worst in the Greek and pushed the Maccabees to revolt. Apparently, there was something about the Jewish mind that didn't mix and match.

Now look at it from the Jewish side: Jews have also borrowed from every culture they've come in contact with. Whatever your grandmother tells you, Abraham did not smear his gefilte fish with chrane. One culture we borrowed more from than perhaps any other was that of Ancient Greece. The Talmud tells us that the only language the Torah could be translated into elegantly is Greek. They said it was a beautiful language. They say that of all peoples, the Greeks had ideas closest to ours. They praised many of the Greek philosophers. Maimonides wrote that Aristotle was half a prophet. The Seder Hadorot, a kind of classic Jewish history book, claims that Aristotle was really Jewish!

So what is going on here? Why such a violent clash? Why were the Jews unable to work out some sort of compromise with a Hellenist ruler?

We need to know because in a very real way, Chanukah lives on. Our society today is a bizarre grafting of these two cultures, the Hellenist and the Jewish. If this conflict existed back then, the question is, has there been some resolution over time?

Or are we still fighting Greek elephants? Simply put: Is our society schizoid?

Head-To-Head — and Beyond

So here's how the conversation goes. Which conversation? The conversation that's been going on ever since the Greek mind and the Jewish mind met one another, almost two and a half millennia ago. Where does it happen? Mostly, somewhere deep inside Jewish minds:

Greek: So tell us about your gods, Mr. Maccabee.

Jew: Um, that's singular.

Greek: Okay, tell me about your gods.

Jew: No, not you. G-d. G-d is singular. Only one god.

Greek: Don't worry, we've got so many I'm sure we can spare a few.

Jew: That's okay, one is enough.

Greek: So, this one G-d, what does He look like? We'd love to make some nice statues for you. You poor, uncultured people, you have no statues!

Jew: That's because He doesn't have looks.

Greek: No looks? Ugly? That's cool! A god of ugliness! Don't worry, we can make ugly statues, too.

Jew: No, no. He has no looks at all. You can't see Him.

Greek: An invisible G-d? Well, maybe we can do that in glass. But you have to give us some description.

Jew: Nope. Sorry. No description.

Greek: You mean nobody ever saw Him? How can you worship something if you don't know what it looks like? I mean, how do you know He exists in the first place?

Jew: It's not that we don't know what He looks like. He doesn't have any looks. He has no image.

Greek: Well, I'm sorry then. If He has no image, we can't make a statue.

Jew: That's fine with us.

Greek: But we'd like to write books about Him. So just give us some definition and we'll work around it.

Jew: Oh, our G-d can't be defined.

Greek: Come, now. Everything has to have a definition. Or else it's not a thing.

J: But G-d is not a thing. He creates things. But He isn't a thing.

G: Oh! So He is the Cosmic Mind Who conceives and shapes all forms from the primal essence-matter.

J: No, He doesn't just form them, He creates them. Out of nothing.

G: Now you're getting silly. You can't make something out of nothing. You need stuff to make it out of.

J: But there wasn't any stuff when things began.

G: There was always stuff. How else could the Cosmic Mind make anything?

J: Out of nothing!

G: Look, you Jews don't really think straight. But that's okay. We've conquered all sorts of primitive cultures. You'll learn, too. So, you worship the Cosmic Mind — you'll get along just great with Aristotle and...

J: No, He's not just the Cosmic Mind.

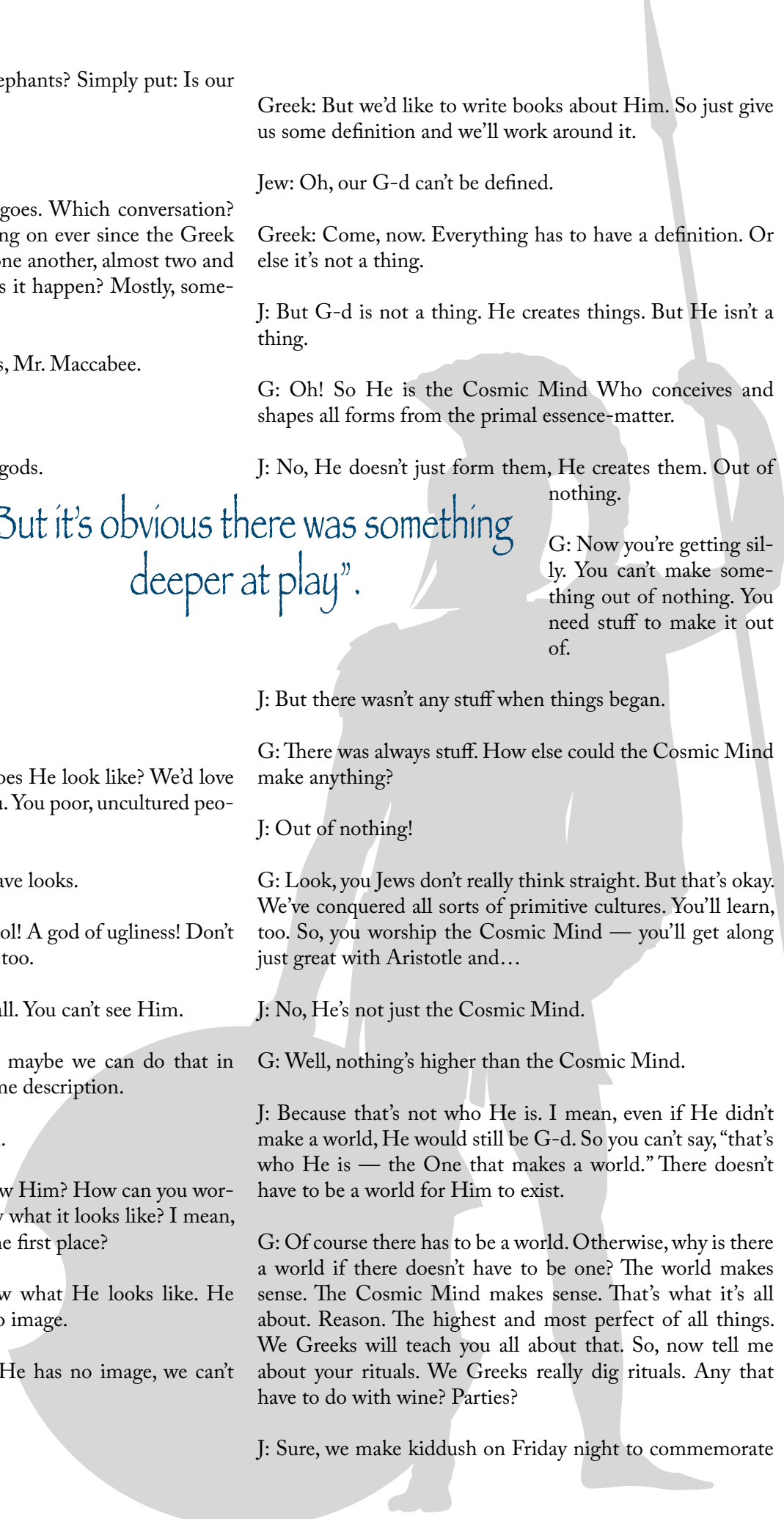
G: Well, nothing's higher than the Cosmic Mind.

J: Because that's not who He is. I mean, even if He didn't make a world, He would still be G-d. So you can't say, "that's who He is — the One that makes a world." There doesn't have to be a world for Him to exist.

G: Of course there has to be a world. Otherwise, why is there a world if there doesn't have to be one? The world makes sense. The Cosmic Mind makes sense. That's what it's all about. Reason. The highest and most perfect of all things. We Greeks will teach you all about that. So, now tell me about your rituals. We Greeks really dig rituals. Any that have to do with wine? Parties?

J: Sure, we make kiddush on Friday night to commemorate

"But it's obvious there was something deeper at play".



the Creation of the world from nothing.

G: Well, you can give up that one now, since I've just shown you that creation of the world from nothing makes no sense whatsoever.

J: We don't eat milk with meat.

G: Why not?

J: G-d says so.

G: For what reason?

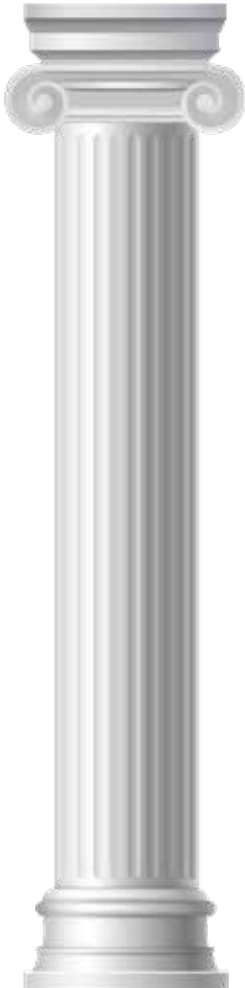
J: Reason? He needs a reason? For the same reason He created heaven and earth!

G: Which is?

J: He just wanted to.

G: That's not a reason!

J: Sure it is. He decided He would like a world where there would be milk and meat and He would tell people, "Don't eat that milk and meat together!" and they would listen.



"I'll bet our G-d could make a world where parallel lines meet."

G: That makes no sense. That's not a reason!

J: Reason is just another of His creations.

G: Reason is the ultimate! There is nothing higher than Reason!

J: Okay then, explain to me why the world is the way it is. Why does one plus one equal two? Why does the square of the length of the hypotenuse equal the sum of the squares of the lengths of the other two sides? Why do parallel lines never meet?

G: Because those are the rules of geometry!

J: So why does the Cosmic Mind, as you call Him, have to follow your rules of geometry?

G: They're not our rules! They are the self-evident truths of nature!

J: Why are these the truths and not something else?

G: You stubborn Jew! Don't you see that this is the most elegant, rational way things could be?

J: I'll bet you He could break them. I'll bet our G-d could make a world where parallel lines meet. He could break any of the laws of nature.

G: You can't break laws of nature! They're not like laws of the state or like your silly laws about cheeseburgers. They are truths. They are perfect. They are the ground of reality. They are because they have to be.

J: Nothing has to be. Nothing but the Source of Being. But He could be any way He wants.

G: Geometry has to be. Cause and effect has to be. Logic has to be. If $A = B$ then $B = A$. That is an absolute Truth. It must be.

J: Why?

G: Why?! Because if they don't have to be, then I and you and this whole world have no real substance! And that cannot be!

J: That's just what I was trying to tell you. This world has no real substance. The only truth is...

G: Don't say it, Mr. Maccabee! You people are downright dangerous.

And that is why the Greeks did not forbid Jewish practice altogether. What they (initially) forbade were those practices that they saw as irrational. Those practices that Jews do simply because they believe they have a relationship with a Being who is higher than reason. That, they could not tolerate.

Of course, as you know, eventually some bright boys came up with geometries where parallel lines meet; cause and effect got bumped out of quantum physics; the world was discovered to have had a beginning; and even now it still is really nothing because the sum of all radiant energy minus all of the universe's mass equals zero. Most of us today have accepted that there are things that are the way they are not for

any reason, but just because that's the way they are. Nothing has to be the way it is. Why do masses attract? Why is the grass green? Why is there anything at all? There doesn't have to be a reason for everything, because reason is not the foundation of reality. So what's so absurd about connecting to the Foundation of Reality through mitzvot that are beyond reason?

“You don't necessarily apply yourself to mundane matters of how things work”

Mind Under Matter

Nevertheless, the battle continues. You see, as mentioned above, the Greek mind, aside from worshipping human intellect, is also a great syncretist. That means it can hammer together the most incongruous ideologies without blinking an eyelid. You've heard of Rice-Christians? Peyote-Catholics? The Greek mind could do any of that, and more.

The two characteristics go hand in hand: When there's nothing higher than intellect, intellect has no guiding light. Everything, even the stupidest thing — as long as it doesn't deny intellect — can be tolerated. Aristotle knew that the pantheon of Athenian gods was nonsense. But what's wrong with the common people, who cannot understand any better, having their way?

You can easily see that a knowledge of an absolute Divine Will beyond reason has become a necessity for human survival. Without the supposition of a Divine Will, whatever you wish to make sense can make sense. If your system of logic cannot support an idea, just change the postulates and rethink the data. Anything can be made to make sense when you determine the assumptions. Every society has had its philosophers and philosophers have justified everything imaginable — from coliseum killing games to gas chambers.



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Strangely, this may have worked to humanity's advantage in one regard: The Greek mind applied itself to figuring out the material world. When your belief system begins with Divine revelation you don't necessarily apply yourself to mundane matters of how things work. So technological progress became chiefly the domain of the Greek mind throughout history.

But it also has some nefarious consequences. Because when you marry intellect and materialism (a good description of Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany), you've entered a bottomless pit of quicksand.

Which brings us to a fascinating point. The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that in Hebrew, the name for ancient Greece, Yavan, has another meaning: quicksand (as in Psalms 40:3 and Talmud, Eruvin 19a). Water mixes with sand, dirt and clay. You step in it and you can't get out. The more you try to climb up, the further down you go.

Take a look at the letters that spell Yavan in Hebrew: ףׁ . It starts with a small point of a yud — representing wisdom. That stretches down to become a vav. And the vav stretches even further down, below the line, to become a long nun. It's all a description of the process of intellect sinking into the material world and, with nothing to hold it in place, sinking further and further.

A Donkey and an Ox

Today, we have those syncretists who wish to marry materialism with Torah. And nothing is less congruous than that.

Materialism is the ultimate of Greece stuck in the mud. It is the idea that all that exists is that which can be observed, described and explained. Evolutionism, for example, is a materialistic explanation of existence. When people became disillusioned with the church and with faith, they needed an explanation of existence that relied on Chance and Necessity alone, without recourse to G-d. Darwinism and current cosmologies provide just that. So do the standard interpretations of history we are taught today.

Torah is an understanding that behind the world lies a Divine Will, unhampered by the limitations of nature or human logic, because it is the source of all this. Why are there laws of nature? Because G-d generally chooses to work in consistent ways. Why did history unfold the way it did? Because that is all in G-d's plan.

When someone tries to provide a materialistic explanation for Torah and mitzvot, they are creating a Promethean bed, killing all sense of Torah in the process. So too, attempting to

resolve conflicts between evolutionary doctrines and Torah makes less sense than marrying a donkey to an ox.

Yes, we try to understand as much as we can. The Torah commands us to think deeply, to immerse our intellects in study and comprehension. Whatever we can fit into intellect, we must strive to do so. Whatever explanation we can give, we must give it. But always with the sense that with every new grain of understanding, we have expanded the seashore of the Infinite Unknowable.

We can have a thousand reasons for not mixing meat and milk, but when it comes down to it, we do it because that is our personal connection with the Divine Will, the Life of All Things. And that is the victory of Chanukah.

Rabbi Tzvi Freeman, a senior editor at Chabad.org, also heads our Ask The Rabbi team. He is the author of Bringing Heaven Down to Earth and more recently Wisdom to Heal the Earth.

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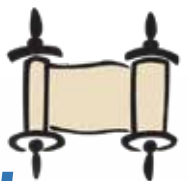


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Dandelions **FOR** Chanukah

By Chana Sara Einseiger



with a little push
one yellow speck
can turn into a
hundred

As the winter settles in and Chanukah comes around I want to remind you of something of spring, yellow dandelions. I know they are not everyone's favorite flower, but to me they are wonderful. They speckle all the landscapes whether it be country fields or city cracks, there they are bright pops of yellow bobbing in the wind. Yet what I think of as beautiful yellow flowers brightening my view, they're also considered weeds ruining the immaculate lawns and gardens. There is a host of sprays, chemicals, and gardening hacks designed to wipe them out. People on occasion have even accidentally poisoned their own pets in the ambition to have their lawns free of the bright yellow pests, but still I love them and their resilience.

This little flower reminds me of our Jewish history, how so much of our traditions, beliefs, even us as a people, were looked at nothing but a weed to be destroyed. We have been chased from country to country. Pharaoh threw our babies into the river, throughout the medieval ages we were burned, chased, hunted. The Romans penalized a gruesome death for teaching Torah. The Nazis slaughtered us by the millions. We have faced brutalities in Russia, in England, in Spain, in France, close your eyes and point to a map, chances are at some point the Jews weren't welcome there. As we approach Chanukah, the theme is just this. They tried to destroy us, the Ancient Greeks didn't want our beliefs and culture to be a spot on their lawns, our beauty

was a threat to their gardens of false gods. Yet, despite their best methods and tactics, just like the dandelion we persevered through the Maccabees. This is our story time and time again. It's truly an amazing thing.

The dandelion multiplies in a strong gust of wind, with a little push one yellow speck can turn into a hundred. Just like when the Jews of Ancient Greece banded together, we must always be mindful of this push. I believe one came from the tragedy in Pittsburgh. As news came in on the eleven people gunned down while they were in shul, hearts across our nation sank. We all felt their pain, that was us being gunned down. Not just them, it was us. They can no longer share our beauty across the dim sidewalks, it was taken from us. This is a reminder to our persevering dandelion nature, since they can no longer spread their light in the world, we all must do it for them. Every mitzvah is a light, every mitzvah is that seed being planted to bring another yellow speck. We must take every tragedy, the past and the present as that push for us to cling to our heritage while we spread all the wonderful aspects of it. Because just like the dandelions, we will come back always, despite any methods used against us.

We have so many opportunities to brighten the world, we should take as many as we can. We can spread our light like the dandelions on the fields. This year may our menorahs in the window be our specks brightening the landscapes, may every kind of neighborhood from the crowded cities to sprawling farmlands be speckled with the yellow lights of our candles.

Chana Sara lives in Whitehall, Pennsylvania, She helps produce the Wellsprings Magazine which is published 5 times a year. What she enjoys most about working at a Chabad House is having the constant opportunity to learn something new. Her favorite words are mama and morah.



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BREAKING GROUND



CHABAD OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY BREAKS GROUND ON NEW BUILDING

By Chaya Halperin

Amidst the unimaginable events that have occurred within the Jewish world the past few weeks, in the Jewish life one thing continues to shine—Jewish life persevering. Throughout it all, we have continued. Growing, expanding, spreading light. A beacon of light shone from the ground to the gates of heaven and God's throne on Sunday, Nov. 18, coming from a small city called Allentown.

From humble beginnings in the home of Rabbi Yaacov and Devorah Halperin where they held weekly services in their livingroom, Chabad has grown to a bustling, vibrant community with educational and social events for all ages. From their renowned Hebrew School, Gan Yealdim Preschool, Camp Gan Israel, teen clubs, Smile on Seniors and The Friendship Circle, Chabad programs has something for everyone! On Nov. 18, the Jewish community celebrated as a family the ceremonial groundbreaking for the new Chabad Center of the Lehigh Valley. Over 150 people came to show their support for the work and love of the spreading of Judaism in their hometown. The event memorialized not only the growth the Jewish community

Lehigh Valley

has seen in the past years, but also signified the continuation of growth that is expected in the years to come. Despite the hard and scary events facing American Jewry, their strength and love has continued to persevere.

The groundbreaking event included socializing, food and music, well wishes from community members and leaders, the Rabbi and Rebbetzin, and honorable dignitaries including state senators, all there to witness the occasion. With short speeches from the members of Senate to the touching words of Jewish children who are attendees of the Chabad Hebrew School to remarks from Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley interim executive director Jeri Zimmerman, everyone shared their happiness and pride in the moment.

The new \$3 million building will boast a beautiful sanctuary, social hall, a brand new preschool classroom, a library, a CTeen lounge, and much more. The Lehigh Valley is excited to share the news of the inspiring continuation of Jewish community.



Your & Leher



Gan Yeladim really fell into fall this year with fun learning activities involving pumpkins and leaves. We painted, counted sorted and more! Who can forget our weekly music class, gymnastics and shabbat party?



Students at Chabad Hebrew school showed incredible maturity, understanding, and empathy. The Lubavitcher Rebbe of blessed memory always taught that in the darkest of time we must add in acts of goodness and kindness. Flood the world with more light to dispel the darkness. Eleven students were chosen to take on special mitzvot they will add in their own lives in memory of the 11 lives lost.



Chabad Hebrew School Students Holding their Mitzvah Flames, made in memory of the 11 lives lost in Pittsburgh.



Lehigh Valley



It's been a great start to a whole new year of our program, The Bat Mitzvah Club. We are so excited to see our old friends and so many new faces. To start off, we decorated our own shabbat candles and learned the value of adding light to the world. We have many more fun, educational, and all around fantastic club meetings to come!



Bat Mitzvah Club

If you are a girl attending 5th-7th grade and would like to join the Bat Mitzvah Club contact our office at: office@chabadlehighvalley.com



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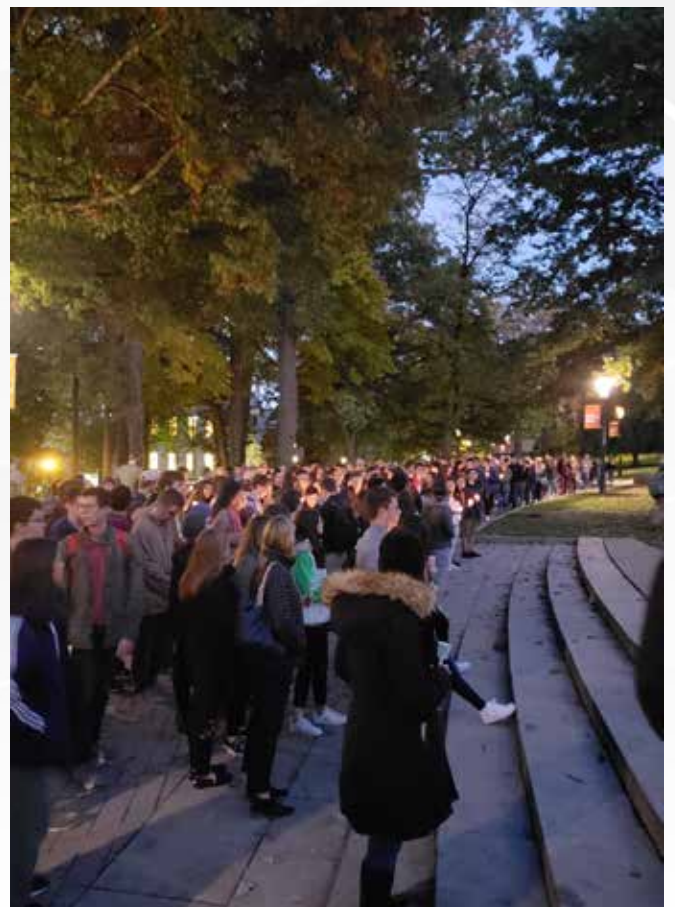


Chabad at Lehigh organized a memorial service in memory of the lives lost in the Tree of Life Synagogue. They found time to hang mezuzahs for the student fraternities.

Chabad serving Muhlenberg students also held memorial services for the Tree of Life, after kicking off a new year loaded with activities.



Rabbi Zalman Greenberg and Rabbi Steve Nathan putting up a mezuzah in Aepi fraternity's new house.



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Hold On to Your Roots

By Samantha Barnett



Pink equals punk. A mohawk means you're a rebel. Long beards indicate wisdom. Flowing hair on a woman is attractive, but it makes a man into a hippie. There are "good hair days" and "bad hair days." Why is hair so important? Is it just an accessory to our face, or does it define us?

I started to ponder this question when attending my first haircutting party. There's a Jewish custom whereby a boy receives his first haircut on his third birthday. The haircutting celebration is called an upsherin, and its purpose is to mark the beginning of the child's Jewish education.

It started out like any other child's birthday celebration. The smoke from the grill filled the backyard with the hot smell of summer. Adults roamed around the buffet table, piling potato salad, barbecued

chicken and coleslaw onto their plates. Tons of children jumped up and down on the moon bounce like bunnies. Others ran around holding hands and giggling. Little girls stood mesmerized by the cotton candy machine, as they twirled the pink fluff onto paper cones.

"May I have your attention, please?" said the father of the birthday boy. His black hat gave him a look of authority. He was standing in front of the house and speaking over a microphone.

The birthday boy stood on a chair as everyone gathered around him. Jacob was dressed in his finest gray suit, complete with a vest and a maroon yarmulke. Long white tzitzit strings hung from his waist. With his perfectly golden locks falling just below his ears, he reminded me of a poster baby from the nineteenth century.

The father stood behind his child. He asked that before a person cut the hair they put some money in the purple plush Torah-shaped charity box. The money would go to charity.

Jacob gazed up at his mother. She smiled at him as she held the scissors in her hand and passed them to the child's grandfather.

"I want to do it!" Jacob protested, motioning to the scissors in his mother's hand. The crowd giggled at the unexpected chutzpah of the child.

The father proceeded to call the names of the people who would clip off a curl. The grandparents had the first honors, then the parents, the aunts and uncles, cousins, and finally the friends of the family.

Nothing fazed Jacob. He stood pa-

tiently eating a hot dog and drinking a Coke as each guest snipped off a lock. His mom came by every once in a while, fixing his velvet headcovering and making sure to pin up his sideburns, the part of the hair a Jew is not supposed to cut, so they wouldn't accidentally be removed by one of the guests.

Suddenly, I heard my name called.

I felt my feet heavily thump as I took three to five steps to approach the child. I reached deep into my purse, pulling out a few coins to put in the charity box. The father handed me the scissors. I held them in my hand for a second as I stared at the back of this kid's head.

"Where should I cut?" I asked the mother. I was so afraid to do it wrong. Being a self-titled fashionista, I wouldn't want to give a bad haircut to anyone.

The mother pointed to a place where a few curls re-

so high? I don't remember if I cried as I saw my precious brown curls fall to the ground. Was I traumatized that something that was attached to me a few minutes ago was now trash? Was I happy when I looked in the mirror afterwards?

I don't remember mine, but I have a feeling Jacob will remember his. When I got my haircut, it was an experience. But for Jacob, it was an event. I had a professional cut my hair. He had his family and friends contribute. I was one of many clients in a crowded salon. His experience happened in his own backyard.

Standing there, cutting Jacob's hair, I thought about what was so different about this event. Why have a public haircutting party?

An event is goal-oriented. It marks the act being performed as significant enough to mark on a calendar, take pictures of, and remember. The more work invest-

*"When I got my haircut, it was an experience.
But for Jacob, it was an event"*

mained. In all honesty, I'd never given anyone a haircut before, but I felt that this was not a good time to mention that piece of information.

Imitating the calmness of my own hairdresser, I took an inch of yellow strands between my fingers and proceeded to trim. I was being careful not to pull. He stood as still as a statue as I tried to keep my hand steady. Cutting hair was a lot more difficult than cutting paper. Time slowed as I rushed to finish. As I trimmed, the curls fell, and I grabbed them in my hand and placed them in the plastic bag.

I don't remember my first haircut. I have no idea what the person who cut my hair even looked like. Was it a man or a woman? Were they nice to me? Did my mom or dad hold my hand and tell me that it was going to be okay? Did I know my hair would grow back? Did I feel trapped under that gigantic cape they put on me? Did I feel that I couldn't escape because the chair was

ed in something, the more it is valued. It also, in some way, legitimizes what you are doing as meaningful. The support of family and friends as you embark upon a new experience makes it more exciting, and thus, more worthwhile.

The first thing I noticed was how beautiful it is to value a first. Furthermore, I realized what hair symbolizes. Both men and women worry and spend a great deal of money and time styling or coloring their hair. In fact, hair is the easiest thing on your body to change. It's so fragile: it can be removed by the smallest cut. Most of the time, the person whose hair is being cut doesn't feel a thing. However, if someone pulls your hair, it really hurts.

Hair, like a person's experiences throughout life, partially defines a person. Sometimes it's an outward expression of the way we feel inside. Other times, it portrays an image to the outside world. Throughout our life,

people will make impressions on us. Every person we meet will mold us in some way. We might not even notice this happening until we look back into the mirror of what our lives have become, and even then, we may see only a reflection of what we truly are.

If we aren't careful, we could let the outside world define us. Hopefully, the only ones who make a cut into our souls are friends and family who care about us. But most important of all, we must remember our roots. If we always hark back to where we come from, then we can never stray too far from who we really are. But if we just let others mold us, we become a product of our society and not a true individual. At the same time, we should open ourselves up to learn from everyone, for that is the mark of a wise person.

Jacob, at three years old, is just beginning his life. Jacob's haircut was a rite of passage from babyhood to boyhood. He is now at the point where he can stand on his own, eat on his own, talk on his own and become his own person. For the first time, he is going outside his home, maybe even for the first time without his family, to encounter the outside world. Along the way, both positive and negative events will shape who he becomes. But, in the end, it is remembering where he comes from that will form him into the ultimate person he is destined to be.

*Samantha Barnett is a writer. She lives in Los Angeles, California.
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