

# **The Spirit of the Hasmoneans**

**From History to Posterity**

**A Collection of Writings for Hanukkah**

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In Memory of  
**Ruth and Fritz Blank**  
**Sarah and David Barg**  
**Irvin Barg**

Dedicated by  
**Gladys and David**  
**Blank**

**To Yeshivat Meir Harel, Modiin**

Kol Hakavod to Rav Shenvald and all of the Rabbanim  
and faculty of the Yeshiva,  
**Bracha Vehatzlacha.**

May the yeshiva succeed in all that it does,  
In **Torah study** and in the **service of the IDF**,  
In educating and inspiring students from  
both **Israel and the Diaspora.**

**Our brachot for a Happy Chanukkah to all of  
you who walk in the path of the Hashmonaim.**

Robert (Tzvi) and Suzanne Segal  
Woodmere, NY

In memory of our dear mother and  
grandmother

**ALIZA bat Yakov and Misha**  
**FREIDMAN ע"ה**

Born on Channukah

Her life was filled with light and joy  
Faith and confidence in Hashem

Passed away 14 Tishrei 5771

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Dear readers,

As Hanukkah draws near, it is our pleasure to share with you Divrei Torah from the Beit Midrash of the "Meir Harel" Hesder Yeshiva in Modiin, the Beit Midrash that continues the spirit of the Hasmoneans.

You are invited to read the following articles from the Beit Midrash, which will enrich the Hanukkah experience for you and your family.

Happy Hanukkah

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## **Hanukkah Candles at the Door of the Home and the Victory of Holiness and Modesty of the Jewish Home**

The mitzva of lighting Hanukkah candles is a unique and beloved mitzva that we fulfill at the entrance to our homes. By being meticulous about this mitzva, we will certainly prepare ourselves to absorb the intense light of the Hanukkah candles, which will illuminate within and upon our homes, inside and out.

The Talmud (Shabbat 21b) expresses the mitzvah of lighting Hanukkah candles in a singular fashion:

"The Rabbis' taught: The mitzvah of Hanukkah is one candle for a man and his household. The fervent light a candle for each person, and the extremely fervent, etc."

R. Yehoshua Falk asks in his *P'nei Yehoshu'a*:

What is different about the mitzvah of lighting Hanukkah candles that the obligation is placed upon the household and not upon the person who is lighting in order to publicize the miracle?

He offers an answer, but remains unsatisfied with his own answer.

The Talmud continues by citing the following *beraita*:

The Rabbis taught: The mitzvah is to place the Hanukkah light by the door of one's home, on the outside.

It then asks for further specification of the proper place for the Hannukah candles, and answers:

Rav Acha says: on the right. Rav Shmuel says: on the left. The halakhic conclusion is: on the left, so that the Hanukkah candle can be on the left and the mezuzah on the right"

The placement of the candle in the doorway is explained rather simply: the door offers the greatest publicity for the miraculous victory over the Greeks. Yet it may still be asked: what is the miracle that needs to be publicized? What was the decree, and how did the miracle nullify it? Furthermore, is the doorway merely the most public place in the home, or is there an intrinsic connection between the door of the home and the miracle (a connection that is part of what must be publicized)? And what is the link between this and the mitzvah of mezuzah?

Rav Kook explains that the decree of the Greeks and the miraculous victory of Hanukkah are related to modesty and the sanctity of the Jewish home (*Eyn Ayah*, Shabbat I, p. 61):

The victory that God granted was through his servants, the *Kohanim*. They prevailed over the Greeks, who wished not only to destroy the physical essence of the Jewish people, but also to annihilate the essence of life that Israel makes known in the world, namely, **that purity and modesty are the**

**primary objectives of family life; all other traits and philosophies follow from these.**

**The Greeks hated this and viewed it as the mortal enemy of their culture, which championed the joy of life, physical and imaginary pleasures. Therefore, the Greeks greatly despised Israel's Torah.**

The destruction of modesty was a central pillar of Greece's strategy for converting Jews away from their religion and ideology. This is explained in an early Hanukkah *midrash* (*Otzar Hamidrashim* Eisenstein p. 185):

In the days of the Greeks, they decreed that any Jewish person who makes a bolt or a lock on his door would be put to death by the sword. Why did they make such a decree? To cause the Jewish people to lack dignity and privacy (modesty). Any house that does not have a door does not have dignity or modesty; anyone who wants to enter, whether day or night, may enter.

When the Jews saw the decree, they broke off their doors and could not eat, drink, or have marital relations. They said to God: Master of the world, how much can we suffer? He said to them: **because of the sin of the mezuzah...** The Jewish people were living without doors...

The sin of contempt for the mitzvah of placing a mezuzah at the entrance to the home is what caused the horrible decree of the

Greeks forbidding homes from having doors and compromising the modesty and sanctity of the Jewish home. The *midrash* goes on to describe the development of the decree until the outbreak of the revolution against the Greeks. When they defeated the Greeks and nullified their decrees, the Sages enacted that the Hanukkah candles be lit at the entrance to the home.

In light of this *midrash*, we may add: the entrance to the house symbolizes the modesty and sanctity of the Jewish home. Our homes have entrances that are sometimes locked. They are opened and closed based on need. The house is the private domain of the individual, where the family can have intimacy and privacy for those things that require it. Not everything needs to be exposed to the public domain. A home open to everything is a home that makes no distinctions between the private and public spheres. The public display of activities that demand privacy opposes the Jewish value of modesty.

The mitzvah of mezuzah – disrespect for which led to the Greek decree against modesty – is also related to the door of the home and the sanctity of the Jewish household. The very name “mezuzah” derives not from the parchment or its case, but from the doorpost, the part of the house where the scroll is affixed. The mezuzah is a visible sign and expression of the sanctity and modesty that resides within.

**Laxity about the mitzvah of mezuzah no doubt undermined the sanctity of the home and brought about the decree of the Greeks,**

**who tried to take advantage of the Jews' laxness and leverage it toward causing them to abandon their religion and ideology entirely.** Therefore, the mitzvah of Hanukkah candles, like the mitzvah of mezuzah, both apply to the home and to what it symbolizes.

The identification of the door as a symbol and measure of a Jewish home's modesty and sanctity first appears in the story of Bilaam who, looking out over the Jewish encampment, declared:

How good are your tents, Jacob, your dwellings, Israel.  
(Bamidbar 24:5)

Rashi explains:

He saw that **their doors where not directly across from each other.**

R. Ephraim Luntshitz, in his commentary *Kli Yakar* to Shemot 38:8, further develops this principle, relating it to the women who donated their mirrors towards the construction of the laver (*kiyor*) that stood in the courtyard of the Tabernacle:

Scripture states: "[the mirrors] that they used at the door of the Tent of Meeting." But the Tent of Meeting had not yet been constructed!? Some explain that this refers to Moshe's tent, which was also called the Tent of Meeting. However, it seems to me that the issue is all about the modesty of women, as Scripture states (Bereishit 18:8): "She is in the tent," and Rashi comments, "she was modest." The same is

true for the mirrors that were used at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting – the Torah means that the women used them in their own tents. The reason it says “door” is because with regard to a prostitute it says: "she sat at the door, in view" (Bereishit 38:14). **Therefore, the Torah refers to the entrance to the tent with regard to modesty...**"

Recently, a firestorm has erupted regarding the intentions of the "Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance" organization to hold a gay pride parade in the streets of Jerusalem. It seems to me that there is no need to waste words articulating the Torah's approach to this phenomenon. With a deeper look, however, it is clear that the issue at stake is the identity of the Jewish home. It would seem that there is nothing that runs more contrary to a Jewish home than to turn it into an "open house" to all.

There is an argument going on in Israel with an organization trying to install and legitimize alternative types of families. This organization calls itself "the open house." From a deeper perspective, it is clear that the bone of contention with them is about the holiness of the essence of the Jewish home. In light of what we have learned, that the door is a symbol of spirituality and modesty, it seems that there is nothing more opposed to the character of the Jewish home than opening it to the public. On Hanukkah, The holiday of the Jewish home, let us go out to the doors of our homes and light the Hanukkah candles, symbolizing the victory of the modesty and sanctity of the Jewish home

## Jewish Bravery – Then and Now

The *gemara* tells a story that, more than any other, expresses the bravery of the Hasmoneans, which itself was rooted in a sense of holiness and in the *Beit Ha-Mikdash*:

It was taught in a *beraita*: Yochanan the *Kohein Gadol* heard a heavenly voice (*bat kol*) coming from the Holy of Holies, saying: “the young men who went to wage war against Antiochus were victorious.” (Sotah 33a)

Rashi explains:

“The young men who waged war” – the young Hasmonean priests went out to war against the Greeks before Yom Kippur, and they fought on Yom Kippur itself. Yochanan heard this heavenly voice while he was performing Yom Kippur service.

On the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, the young Hasmonean priests waged war, and were victorious. Alongside the Temple service to achieve atonement for the Jewish people, these young priests were defending the very physical existence of the Jewish people. In the Holy of Holies, the place where one rises to the highest levels of spirituality, the message of their victory was sounded, right in the middle of the holiest of services, by a divine voice. This description best characterizes the immense source of the Hasmoneans’ power. It also best demonstrates the possibility of integrating or merging disparate parts.

Yehuda said: It is an easy matter for many to be delivered in the hands of the few. There is no difference, in the eyes of God of heaven, between winning with a great multitude and with a small company, for the success of war is not in the size of the army. Rather, strength comes from heaven... We will fight for our lives and our Torah. (I Maccabees 3:18-21)

Elsewhere as well (I Maccabees 15:33), Yehuda's brother Shimon reinforces their faith by justifying their path:

We have not taken other men's land or hold that which belong to others – only the inheritance of our fathers, which was for some time unjustly possessed by our enemies. When we had the opportunity, we reclaimed the inheritance of our fathers.

Even the call to war and the battle cry constitute expressions of the unique spirit that combines readiness for war with reinforced faith and spirit:

After these words, they were greatly encouraged and resolved even to die for the Torah and their land. He appointed his brothers Shimon, Yosef [possibly Yochanan and possibly Yosef ben Zechariah], and Yonatan to head each division of his army... when he gave the battle cry, “Salvation is God's” (*La-shem Ha-yeshu'a*), he stood at the head of the first division and joined the battle. (II Maccabees 8:21-23)

It further states:

So the camp removed and encamped on the south side of Emmaus. Yehuda said: Gird yourselves, and be valiant men. Be ready in the morning to fight these nations that are assembled against us to destroy us and our sanctuary. For it is better for us to die in battle than to see evil against our nation and our Temple. What heaven wants shall be done. (I Maccabees 3:57-60)

Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook, the son of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, explained a statement of his father as follows:

In an ideal situation, there is integration and harmony between the "seed of man"... – which symbolizes spirituality – and "the seed of animals"... Under perfect conditions there is a spiritual strength, a grandness of spirit, that combines with physical vigor and power...

The Hasmonean era is the source... the light of the Hasmoneans shattered into fragments, but in the future it will be reconsolidated, when the Jewish people gather again to return to their land. Now, with the return of Jewish people from the exile to the land of Israel, the Torah is returning home, and the scattered sparks of the light of the Maccabees are being collected into a great light. The Jewish people are progressing gradually towards physical and spiritual independence. ("Ohr HaMaccabim", in *Kinyan Torah* [summaries of lectures by R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook], p. 96)

# Deciding the Debate about the Essence of Heroism, in Battle and in Life

On Hanukkah, we mark the military victory of the Hasmoneans over the Seleucid Greeks. The war broke out over cultural and religious disputes, namely, the Greeks' attempt to Hellenize the Jewish people, not over national or territorial disputes. For that reason, the purification of the Temple and the renewal of its service have far-reaching spiritual consequences. Yet there is another facet of the Jewish victory over Greece, albeit one related to the cultural and spiritual struggle: the debate over the essence of heroism.

There are echoes of this conceptual debate in a talmudic passage that describes a bizarre moral philosophical dialogue between Alexander the Great – who lived several decades before the Hasmonean Era – and the “Elders of the South”:<sup>1</sup>

Alexander of Macedon asked the Elders of the South ten things... He said to them, “Who is called a hero?”... “They replied: ‘Who is a hero? One who suppresses his urges.’”  
(*Tamid* 31b, and compare to *Avot* 4:1)

Apparently, Alexander – the Greek ruler, philosopher, and general who conquered the entire known world – expected a military answer

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<sup>1</sup> In the writings of the Arizal, the south (“*Darom*” or “*Negev*”) is related to the mystical sphere of wisdom. Rav Kook too writes: “Wisdom is particularly found in the south of the land of Israel – ‘the Elders of the South’ [*Tamid* 31b] and ‘one who wishes to be wise should face south’ [*Bava Batra* 25b]”.

that would elucidate the phenomenon of belligerent heroism, like in Plato's Socratic dialogue *Laches*. However, the Elders of the South answered him from the realm of morals, according to which heroism is a virtue of character, not a physical trait; it is not measured exclusively on the battlefield. In Greece, as in other nations of the ancient world, heroism was measured in terms of risk faced and aggressiveness displayed.

Heroism in war was perceived as an expression of brutality, physical aggression, and violence. The soldier's toughness and courage in the face of the threats of war were also viewed as overcoming the inborn instinct of fear. Soldiers were often motivated by hatred and demonization of the enemy, the thrill of war and the hunt, and the expectation of material reward that they would win along with victory. The cultures of these nations contain odes to victory, to their undaunted heroes who overcame their worst fears, and to superhuman heroes with immense powers. The main squares of cities were adorned with statues and sculptures of their national heroes, the symbols of their physical prowess.

In contrast, the Jewish sages had a completely different attitude toward heroism in battle. They viewed it as a psychological and spiritual trait, not as an aggressive phenomenon. This is how R. Yitzhak Arama explains the mishna in *Avot* (4:1) "Who is a hero? One who suppresses his urges":

It similarly states that one who suppresses his urges is a hero, for a hero is one who controls himself. First he controls his

body, and later he will rule others. Similarly, the virtue of wealth belongs to one for whom what he has is sufficient, who understands that if this is what God created him with, then this is all he needs – no more. For that reason, this idea is derived from the verse, “You shall enjoy the toil of your hands” – meaning, God has given you hands, not gold, because your hands are enough for you. It further explains that the honored is the one who honors others; it is meaningless when others honor him, for they may be honoring him without cause. But if one’s actions are honored, then he is truly honored...

This mishna indicates what we should strive for to become like the Sages who separated themselves from that which was permissible to them, and to separate in every way from the habits, traits, and ideas of the masses. For the masses think that the wise man is one who teaches everyone, so the Sages teach that he is really one who learns from everyone. They think the hero is one who conquers another, but he is really the one who conquers himself. A rich man is not a successful businessman, but the one who is happy with his lot, whether he is poor or wealthy. And the honored is the one who honors that which is honorable, not the one who is honored by the masses. (*Akedat Yitzhak*, sec. 65)

The Jewish sages made exceptional displays of physical courage during war contingent on the soldier’s inner strength and virtue; physical prowess flows from this inner strength. War indeed

provides unique tests of inner strength while lives hang in the balance, in the face of terrible events, and when loved ones fall. But these are tests of inner strength, not physical strength. The heroism displayed in war is no greater than the inner heroism required to cope with the great and ongoing challenges of routine life. We can understand Rav Kook's aphorism (*Meged Yerahim* 5674) in light of this approach: "True heroism can be found only where God's light shines."

Heroism depends on the spiritual strength that beats within the heart; when God's light illuminates the soul, one can attain true heroism in battle and in life. That heroism depends on God's illumination of the spirit can be explained in light of something that Rav Kook wrote elsewhere:

Without a goal for life's heroism, the nation will continue to dissipate, its strength will lessen, and it will go to waste, lying ready at the bottom. Life's supernal strength, adorning the community of the people, appears with its goal prepared for it, in our lives, in our inner lives, for which we live and exist, fight and overcome. (*Shemonah Kevatzim* I:18, cited in *Orot* p. 62 [p. 164 in Bezalel Naor's translation])

When one is not motivated by hatred, but by his understanding of and identification with his objective and purpose, his heroism becomes a function of that understanding and identification. God's illumination of his spirit gives his life a sense of destiny and purpose, thus affecting his morale and the courage that beats in his

heart. Rav Kook's words here dovetail with his interpretation of the morning blessing, "Who girds Israel with heroism." According to the Sages, this blessing was instituted for recitation when one puts on a belt, dividing man's heart from his private parts:

Israel's heroism is unique; it is expressed not by conquering, subduing, or annihilating others, but primarily through man's conquest of himself – the divine soul, man's noble spirit, subduing his animalistic body and his unrefined and passionate appetites. This is the heroism of the patient man, who is greater than the war hero, and of one who is governed by spirit, who is greater than one who captures a city.

This is the heroism that girds Israel, an appropriate basis for pure morality and for raising man's value higher than that of an animal... (*Olat Re'ayah*, p. 75)

As Rav Kook explains, wearing a belt that separates the heart from the private parts symbolizes the heart's control over one's urges. For this reason, the blessing invokes the virtue of heroism; it gives man the strength to overcome his drives.

In the modern era, there is consensus regarding the spiritual aspect of heroism. The view of the Jewish sages has won the debate. In virtually every army in the world, it is understood that the soldier's inner strength and morale are decisive factors in battle – no less than the number of tanks and jets. It is now clearer than ever that battle requires more mental fortitude than physical fortitude, and that a soldier endowed with inner strength will be a more effective fighter.

We are still faced with a great task: engraving on human consciousness that the heroism manifested in daily life and the heroism manifested on the battlefield are rooted in the same inner virtue, and that the heroism of one whose spirit governs his passions is greater than the war hero.

To broaden this topic further, it is worth studying this passage from Rav Kook (*Orot* pp. 24-25, pp. 110-111 in Bezalel Naor's translation):

**The Lord of Hosts is the Lord God of Israel, and the hosts of Israel are the hosts of the Lord.** In our spirit and the essence of our soul are engraved, with divine writing, the strength and power of the Creator. The world and its fullness were created, came, and come into existence, live and endure, develop and are strengthened, by the hand of the Lord. Our emergence as a divine people is bound up with the creation of Genesis. "The power of His actions He told His people, to give them the inheritance of nations" (*Tehillim* 111:6).

**It is from the mouth of the divine power that rests in the world, that originated the world and continuously renews it every day, that we heard the Torah.** From the mouth of God's power ("*mi-pi ha-Gevurah*" – see *Makkot* 24a) we heard "I am..." and "You shall not have..." and Moshe received the entire Torah from God's power. We do not abandon the body – neither the individual body not the body politic. Rather, we triumph over it. We know that the good inclination and the evil inclination are one creation from the

hands of the eternal God. So too this world and the next, the social world, the governmental, the spiritual, the theoretical, the ethical, the ideal, the real – all is one unit, and it all ascends the rungs of holiness and is subject to a higher authority. All is, “I spoke and My will was done” (*Menahot* 110a; *Zevachim* 46b).

**Our heroism (*gevurah*) is subtle; it is not possible that it would be the heroism of destruction and annihilation. God’s power (*gevurah*) in the world meets nothing outside its own invention, and thus certainly nothing outside its control. Therefore, in all its trappings, it is full of the depth of compassion.** The arising of contradictions broadens the scope of existence. Good accentuates evil and evil deepens good, delineating and strengthening it. This total absorption in the divine cosmic consciousness, which penetrates to the abyss of the soul, wrapped together with the depths of national history, bound to the fullness of worlds, embracing all with love **and transcending all with strength (*gevurah*), humble and compassionate to all**, is the foundation of the glory of Israel – expressed in the truth of Yaakov, with the goal of God’s throne in the world, which will never end, that keeps us alive.

**Neither with chariots, nor with horses is the foundation of our strength, but rather, “We will utter the name of the Lord our God; they succumbed and fell, we rose and were heartened” (*Tehillim* 20:8-9).** If our self-awareness be superficial, the world’s awareness of our value will be superficial. The world’s understanding of our passion and the divine flight of our soul-life is faulty.

Therefore our first attempts – which arose without deepening the foundation, without baring the spring of life – are dissipated. This dissipation, this terrible rotting, this penetrating pain, will eventuate a new world; a new spirit will circulate among nations, a penetrating, inward consciousness in Israel. Might and heroism; passion and chivalry; faith and victory; transformation of the depth of resignation to a source of salvation and blossoming of life; sublime holiness as old; and all glows with the appearance of redemption: the understanding, the critique, the social order and depth of faith, the renewal of souls and freshness of bodies, through acceleration and progression, from the source of the truthful recognition of the greatness of the name of the Lord, God of Israel, God of all worlds, Creator of all worlds, and Creator of the spirit of man in his midst; from the source of all life with which Israel lives forever and ever.

“I will be magnified and sanctified, and manifest to the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord” (*Yehezkel* 38:23).

“Left and right you shall expand, your seed will inherit nations and desolate cities will be inhabited. Do not fear nor be confounded, for the shame of your youth you will forget and the embarrassment of your widowhood you will no longer remember, for your lover is your Creator, the Lord of Hosts His name, and your redeemer the Holy One of Israel, who be called God of all the earth” (*Yeshayahu* 54:3-5).

# Like Cast Lead: The Expectation of Decisive Victory on Hanukkah

In the middle of Hanukkah, 5768 (December 2007 – January 2008) the IDF launched Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. Even if the operation's timing was determined by human calculation, we are nevertheless “believers, the children of believers” that God, the Master of the Universe who controls wars and cultivates salvation, took part in determining its timing. After all, the days of Hanukkah historically celebrate Jewish heroism.

Our hearts – and the heart of the entire nation – was with our IDF soldiers and officers, among them yeshiva students who spearheaded the war effort in Gaza. We all prayed for their success and their safety, and for a decisive victory.

The necessity of decisive victory is an explicit commandment of the Torah, which permits prolonging war through Shabbat to this end. The Torah commands us: “When in a war against a city you must besiege it for a long time in order to capture it... you shall construct siege works against the city that is waging war on you, until it is reduced” (*Devarim* 20:19-20). The siege must lead to a clear decision, “until it is reduced,” namely, until its walls are breached and demolished (Rashbam *ad loc.*). This is completed only with the complete conquest of the city (as Onkelos's Aramaic translation implies). Alternatively, as implied by Rashi's comments, the conquest is not complete until it results in sovereignty and control over the enemy city.

**As long as a battle has not been decisively concluded, it should not be seen as a success** even if it weakens the enemy and deals him a severe blow. **In war, there is no such thing as a “points decision” – there must be a knockout**, a clear, unambiguous decision; a decision that will preserve victory’s attainments for a long time.

This principle is especially true when fighting over the land of Israel. We find that Moshe cautioned the people: “But if you do not dispossess the inhabitants of the land, those whom you allow to remain shall be stings in your eyes and thorns in your sides” (*Bamidbar* 34:55). Yehoshua issued a similar caution before his death (*Yehoshua* 23:12). Indeed, the past is instructive; the people of Israel paid a steep price for not achieving decisive victory when possessing the land. The exception was the tribe of Yissachar, about whom the Torah states: “He bent his shoulder to the burden, and he became a toiling serf” (*Bereishit* 49:15). Based on Onkelos’s translation, Rashi interprets this verse to mean: “...to shoulder the burdens of war and conquer population centers, since they dwelt on the frontier. Thus, the enemy was subjugated under him like a toiling serf.” In other words, those who were not negligent about achieving decisive victory and conquest dwelt securely in the land of their inheritance, with their enemies as vassals.

This is how King David waged war: “I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back until I destroyed them. I struck them down, and they could rise no more; they lay fallen at my feet.” (*Tehllim* 18:38-39). This teaches us so many principles of waging

war successfully! First: pursuit of the enemy must continue until the mission has been accomplished and the objective obtained. Until then, “I did not turn back until I destroyed them.” Second: even if carrying out the mission entails difficulties, even if it endangers life, “I did not turn back” – the mission must be carried out until it is completed – “until I destroyed them.” Third: one must act with determination and without hesitation, bringing full force to bear, striving for a decisive victory. “I struck them down, and they could rise no more.” And fourth: one must operate in a manner that will preserve the victory’s achievements for a long time; no prolonged or recurring war can be allowed to erode the people’s stamina. Thus, the nation will have the tranquility necessary to make its resources available for building and creating.

This is how the Netziv (R. Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 19<sup>th</sup> century Lithuania) explains *Bamidbar* 24:8 in his commentary, *Ha’amek Davar* (see his commentary on *Devarim* 33:11 as well):

... it is written about King Shaul that he wreaked havoc (*marshi’a*) wherever he turned, whereas King David brought enlightenment (*maskil*) in all of his endeavors. The meaning of both descriptions is that they were successful in their wars. The difference between them was **that some prevail in war but do not conquer their opponents – they only defeat and weaken them.** He has not brought success to his nation, but has only wreaked havoc on his opponents. **Others prevail and then conquer, bringing success to the entire nation... Shaul merely weakened and wreaked havoc on his opponents,** whereas David conquered them, appointing governors over

Edom, Moav, and the other nations he conquered... one who wreaks havoc on his enemies **only weakens them temporarily; they will grow strong again in a few years. It is therefore necessary to be careful.**”

This principle finds expression in the story of Hanukkah as well. R. Yehiel Mikhel Epstein, the author of *Arukh Ha-shulhan* (*Orah Hayim* 683:1) explains why we recite the full *Hallel* all eight days of Hanukkah and do not skip sections, as we do on Pesah:

On Hanukkah we recite the complete *Hallel* because the miracle of the cruse of oil occurred each day; also, because each day has a different number of candles... **so it is like Sukkot, on which there are different sacrifices each day and on which we recite the complete *Hallel***; also, because we read the Torah portions about the tribal princes, and a different prince made his offering each day, and each prince had to recite the full *Hallel* over his offering (*Beit Yosef*); **also, based on what I wrote (in sec. 670), they celebrated eight days of Hanukkah in lieu of the eight days of Sukkot that they did not celebrate, and consequently they recited the full *Hallel* as on Sukkot.**

Here he indirectly answers the question: what is the difference between Pesah and Sukkot? This echoes the Talmud's question: “Why is Sukkot, on which we recite [the full *Hallel*] each day, different from Pesach, on which we do not recite [the full *Hallel* except on the first day]?” The Talmud answers: “Each day of Sukkot had a different offering; there was no difference between offerings

on the days of Pesah” (*Sukkah* 47a). In other words, each day of Sukkot is a sort of separate holiday that has its own special sacrificial offerings. On Pesah, however, the same sacrifices are offered each day. Why?

We can explain the *gemara*’s statements as follows: the holiday of Pesah is delimited by two different events. On the first day was the actual exodus from Egypt, and on the last day was the splitting of the sea. But considering it more carefully, these are not two events, but one prolonged process. It begins on the first day with the exodus, but it is still reversible and can be altered by Pharaoh’s army, which remained capable of retuning the Israelites to Egypt. The process culminated in a final decisive victory with the splitting of the sea and the drowning of Pharaoh’s entire army in the sea: “He hurled horse and rider into the sea.” Thus, each day of Pesah should not be viewed as a separate holiday. On contrast, Sukkot commemorates miracles that happened each day.

So too on Hanukah there were miracles every day, **and there were many events – battles and victories – that led to several achievements and to a decisive victory whose effects were felt for a long time:** the few defeated the many, Jews enjoyed independence and self-government for two centuries, the Temple service was restored, and many Jews fully repented. For this reason we recite the full *Hallel* each day.

Even after Hanukkah ended and the operation in Gaza continued, we hoped and prayed that it would end, in the spirit of Hanukkah on which it began, with a decisive victory, irreversible as cast lead.

# **The Legacy Candles of Judah Maccabee that Shine at the Entrance to our Beit Midrash**

Contrary to the rest of the country, here is Modiin “every day is Hanukkah”!<sup>2</sup> **Here in our Beit Midrash in the city of Modiin, we light the legacy menorah of Judah Maccabee and the Hasmoneans throughout the entire year.** The menorah is placed at the entrance to the Beit Midrash, on the outside, and its light shines inwards, into the Beit Midrash, and outwards.

## **1. THE FIRST CANDLE IN THIS MENORAH IS THE CANDLE OF TORAH.**

It is the middle candle, which the rest of the candles face and from whose strength the rest of the candles shine. This is the candle of the holy menorah, which produces the light of the Torah – “For the commandment is a candle, and the teaching is light.”<sup>3</sup> The menorah is placed at the entrance to the Beit Midrash, on the outside, and its light – the light of Torah – shines inwards into the Beit Midrash, calling upon all who sit there to devote themselves to a quality and demanding learning of Torah, and to rise and become leading Torah

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<sup>2</sup> The article was initially published on Hanukkah 5768 in the Yeshiva’s leaflet for the community, and appeared on the website “DatiLi” with slight changes at the same time. Here we wanted to point out the goals of our Beit Midrash, which shine inside and outside, and the article is brought with slight changes.

<sup>3</sup> Mishlei 6,23

scholars. This same menorah shines outwards, producing a warm, penetrating light, which spreads through the streets into houses and hearts. **This candle, in its variety of colors**, is in memory of the Beit Midrash of Judah Maccabee the Cohen, the great teacher, instructor of Torah. **By lighting this candle, we thank Hashem** for being privileged to restore Torah to its former status, and for enabling us to be “dwellers of the Beit Midrash.” We pray “may we and our offspring... together, know Your Name and study Your Torah for the sake of fulfilling Your desire.”

## **2. THE SECOND CANDLE IS THE CANDLE OF BRAVERY.**

The bravery that is molded in our Beit Midrash; the Jewish bravery of army tents that is molded in the tents of Torah. Jewish bravery from those days that continues in these times. The Jewish bravery that does not stem from physical strength, but rather from the strength of the faith and the power of the soul, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, said the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> The light of bravery in the Beit Midrash, which molds the brave hero who when necessary, goes out to fight and protect Israel. **This candle, in its variety of colors**, is in memory of the bravery of Judah Maccabee and his students, dwellers of the Beit Midrash, who when needed, went out to defend their people, their Torah, and their land. They led the victory over the Greek empire, and severely undermined the Greek army – the most advanced army of the time – with only a small force and meager weapons. The secret of their bravery was in their spirit:

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<sup>4</sup> Zechariah 4,6

“And Judah said: It is an easy matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few, and there is no difference in the sight of the God of heaven to deliver with a great multitude or with a small company. For the success of war is not in the multitude of the army, but strength cometh from heaven... But we will fight for our lives and our laws.”<sup>5</sup> **By lighting this candle, we thank Hashem** “Who girds Israel with might” for “it is He that gives us power to succeed.”<sup>6</sup>

### **3. THE THIRD CANDLE IS THE CANDLE OF REVIVAL.**

This same national revival of Am Yisrael in its historic country, which made its symbol the menorah from the Beit HaMikdah and the olive branches to symbolize the essentiality of the spirit and the legacy in our national revival. Lighting the candle expresses our faith that establishing the Yeshiva in the city is an essential stage in the overall process of building the rejuvenating, future city. **This candle, in its variety of colors**, reminds us that this city is built on the remains of Judah Maccabee’s city. The Yeshiva is a significant stage in building the city, and a link connecting the city of the future with Judah Maccabee’s religious legacy. **By lighting this candle, we thank Hashem** that we are fortunate to be part of building a city in Israel, and making the *bracha* “Metziv Gvul Almana” (setting a border for a widow).

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<sup>5</sup> Maccabees I, 3,18-21

<sup>6</sup> Dvarim 8,18

#### **4. THE FOURTH CANDLE IS THE CANDLE OF LEADERSHIP AND COMMAND.**

This is the same leadership we aspire to form in our Beit Midrash. Leadership of humility and dedication, of bearing the burden of the public, and of leading moves necessary for the nation and the generation. This leadership is also expressed in command and leadership in army tents. **This candle, in its variety of colors,** is in memory of the leadership of Judah Maccabee and his brothers, who led Am Yisrael in a move unprecedented in history. Their leadership recruited the people to a battle that seemed hopeless at first. The Hasmoneans were not graduates of military command and leadership academies, and had no combat training; their only training was of *Kohanim* working in Beit Ha-mikdash. Despite this, they succeeded in fooling a modern army, and defeated it time and time again. **By lighting this candle, we pray to Hashem and request:** “May it be Hashem’s will to strengthen us”<sup>7</sup> and give us the strength to bear the burden, and be inspired by the leadership of the Hasmoneans for the leadership in our generation.

#### **5. THE FIFTH CANDLE IS THE CANDLE OF BRINGING HEARTS CLOSER.**

Building bridges to bring hearts closer and bring about unity among the various sectors in the population. **This candle, in its variety of colors,** is in memory of Judah Maccabee and his brothers who succeeded in unifying and bringing people closer together in

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<sup>7</sup> Birkat HaMazon

troubled times of difficult decrees, calling out loud: “We are brothers, all sons of one father.”<sup>8</sup> **By lighting this candle, we pray to Hashem and request:** “Bless us our Father, all of us as one, in the light of Your Presence.”<sup>9</sup> “On the contrary, place in our hearts the ability to see only the good in our friends and not their shortcomings! May we speak to each other in a way that is straight and desirable in Your eyes. May there be no hatred between friends, Heaven forbid.” (R' Elimelech of Lizhensk)

## **6. THE SIXTH CANDLE IS THE CANDLE OF RETURN.**

The return to ourselves and our roots, our heritage, and our culture. The same return each of us yearns for in his private circle, and as a Beit Midrash in Eretz Yisrael, we yearn for everyone to return to our ancient heritage and culture. **This candle, in its variety of colors,** is in memory of Judah Maccabee and his brothers who were “followers of the Supreme, without whom Israel would have forgotten the Torah and *Mitzvot*.”<sup>10</sup> While “The wicked kingdom of Greeks stood against Your people Israel, to cause them to forget Your Torah and cause them to pass from the laws of Your will,”<sup>11</sup> they succeeded in leading a move unprecedented in its scope, of bringing back a people captivated by the magic of the Greek culture, and due to their efforts, the nation returned to the heritage of its forefathers. **By lighting this candle, we pray to Hashem and request:** “Cause us to return, our

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<sup>8</sup> Taanit 18a

<sup>9</sup> Shemoneh Esreh

<sup>10</sup> Ramban, Breishit 49,10

<sup>11</sup> Al HaNissim

Father, to Your Torah; draw us near, our King, to Your service; and bring us back to You in whole-hearted repentance.”<sup>12</sup> We also request that he bestow upon us the strength to be inspired by the actions of the Hasmoneans to bring hearts closer to the heritage of the forefathers.

## **7. THE SEVENTH CANDLE IS THE CANDLE OF REDEMPTION AND *KIBUTZ GALUYOT* (GATHERING THE DIASPORA).**

The light of the future *Geula* (redemption) and Return to Zion. The same marvelous return of “boys to their borders”, one of the clearest signs of *Geula*, which we aspire to be part of in our Beit Midrash. This return “from the four corners of the earth into our land”<sup>13</sup> of valuable Aliyah from the Diaspora, of setting roots in the country of our forefathers, is what we hope will become the symbol of the city of Modiin, the city of those following the footsteps and heritage of Judah Maccabee. **This candle, in its variety of colors**, is in memory of Judah Maccabee and his brothers who, with their dedication, took part in the redemption of their people and in setting roots in their country, as is written in the Book of Maccabees: “We have neither taken other men's land, neither do we hold that which is other men's: but the inheritance of our fathers, which was for some time unjustly possessed by our enemies. But we having opportunity claim the inheritance of our fathers.”<sup>14</sup> Due to their actions, “the kingship

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<sup>12</sup> Shemoneh Esreh

<sup>13</sup> Shemoneh Esreh

<sup>14</sup> Maccabees I, 15,33-34

returned to Israel for more than two hundred years” (Rambam, beginning of Hanukkah laws). **By lighting this candle, we pray to Hashem** to help us reach the day in which the divine voice will be heard shattering on mountain tops: “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee... And nations shall walk at thy light, and kings at the brightness of thy rising.”<sup>15</sup> And then we will be fortunate that the following will happen to us: “Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: they all are gathered together, and come to thee; thy sons come from far, and thy daughters are borne on the side.”<sup>16</sup> “May You shine a new light on Zion, and may we all speedily merit its light.”<sup>17</sup>

## **8. THE EIGHTH CANDLE IS THE CANDLE OF COMMUNITY**

The extended community of the city of Modiin, which is growing and being built at an overwhelming rate, and has a special illuminating radiance. **This candle, in its variety of colors,** expresses the warmth and hope that exists in the establishment of a new community, which will learn from the past experiences in other places, and take advantage of all the possibilities to formulate proper frameworks from the start. **By lighting this candle, we thank Hashem** for being fortunate enough to join this community and be part of it, contribute to it from our uniqueness and receive from it humbly. This is an encouraging and loving community, and we thank it every day for its support.

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<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 60,1-3

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 60,4

<sup>17</sup> Shacharit

## **9. THE NINTH CANDLE, THE *SHAMASH*, IS THE CANDLE OF THE MIRACLE AND *HASHGACHA PRATIT* (INDIVIDUAL PROVIDENCE).**

This same individual providence that stands by us and assists us in achieving the vision included in the rest of the candles: to re-establish Judah Maccabee's Beit Midrash in the rejuvenated city of Modiin. **This candle, in its variety of colors**, is in memory of the miracles and the special *Hashgacha Pratit* Judah Maccabee was granted in the war of the few against the many, which led to them instituting "these eight days of Chanukah to give thanks and praise to Your great Name."<sup>18</sup> **By lighting this candle, we thank Hashem** "for the miracles, for the redemption, for the mighty deeds, for the saving acts, and for the wonders which You have wrought for our ancestors in those days, at this time"<sup>19</sup> and for his miracles "which are with us daily";<sup>20</sup> **and we pray**: "So may You continue to give us life and sustain us, and gather our exiles to the courtyards of Your sanctuary, to observe Your decrees, to do Your will, and to serve You wholeheartedly. We thank You for inspiring us to thank You, blessed is the God of thanksgivings."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Al HaNissim

<sup>19</sup> Al HaNissim

<sup>20</sup> Shemoneh Esreh

<sup>21</sup> Shemoneh Esreh

# **The Mitzvah of Lighting Hanukkah Candles in the IDF Lighting Hanukkah Candles at the Entrance to Tents and Armored Vehicles**

Yeshiva students on reserve duty asked:

During Hanukkah, we will be with other reserve soldiers in the southern part of the country, in a large exercise that simulates a week of war. During this week we will be sleeping in the field – either in tents or on the armored personnel carriers (APCs). Our question is: can we fulfill the mitzvah of lighting Hanukkah candles by lighting them at the entrance to the tent, and with a blessing?

Response:

To my beloved soldiers, the descendants of the Hasmoneans and the heirs to their legacy of bravely protecting the country:

In order to answer your question, we must clarify a few points.

1. Is the obligation of lighting Hanukkah candles specifically at the entrance of the **home**?
2. If so, what is the definition of home for this purpose?
3. Is a pup tent considered a home for this purpose? What about an APC?
4. There is another question, relating to the safety of lighting Hanukkah candles in this situation. They may cause a fire or set off explosive munitions.

## A. Must the lighting of Hanukkah candles be in a place defined as “home”?

The *gemara* quotes a *beraita* (*Shabbat* 21a):

The Rabbis taught: The mitzvah of Hanukkah is one candle for a man and his household. The fervent light a candle for each person, and the extremely fervent: Beit Shammai say: The first day he lights eight, and he subtracts from there going forward. Beit Hillel say: The first day he lights one, and adds going forward.

What does the *beraita* mean by “a man and his household”? Does it mean that he lights one candle for all the people of the household, as opposed to the “fervent,” who light one candle for each person of the house? Or does the *beraita* mean that the obligation connects the mitzvah to the home – the obligation is for a candle to be lit in his home? Rashi (*ad loc.*) interprets the *gemara* according to the first explanation:

‘One candle for a man and his household’ – **it is sufficient for a person and his entire household to have one candle.** ‘The fervent’ – about fulfilling *mitzvot* – ‘light a candle for each person’ – one candle each night for each member of the household.

On the other hand, Rambam’s precise wording indicates that the obligation is for there to be a candle lit in the house (*Laws of Megilla and Hanukkah* 4:1):

How many candles does he light on Hanukkah? **The mitzvah is that there be one candle lit in every home,** whether it is a large household or a small household.

The same page of *gemara* later cites another *beraita*:

The Rabbis taught: It is a mitzvah to place the Hanukkah candle near the entrance to his house on the outside. If he lives on an upper floor, then he places it in a window facing the public domain. At a time of danger, he places it on his table, and it is sufficient.

This implies that the *gemara* connects publicizing the miracle with the home (See Rashi *ad loc.* who says that if one has a courtyard that opens to the public domain, he should place the candles by the entrance to the house, not the entrance to the courtyard. Tosafot disagree).

Perhaps we can infer similarly from Rambam's formulation (Laws of Megilla and Hanukkah 3:3) about the root of the mitzvah to light Hanukkah candles:

For this reason, the rabbis of that generation enacted that the eight days, which begin on the 25th of Kislev, should be days of happiness and praise; on them we light candles in the evening at the **entrance to the home**.

[It is possible that this inference is not necessary; he may be emphasizing his opinion that even with the fervent one person lights the candles on everyone's behalf.]

R. Yehoshua Falk explains in *P'nei Yehoshua* (*ad loc.*) that the *beraita* means that the mitzvah of lighting Hanukkah candles is an obligation of the house:

“a man and his household” – it seems that what is different about this mitzvah from other *mitzvot* – which are personal obligations on each individual, as is established: "it is better for him to do a mitzvah himself than through a proxy" (*Kiddushin* 41a) – is that here the main mitzvah is to place the

candles close to the public domain for the publicizing of the miracle. **Therefore, they made this mitzvah an obligation of the house, as it were.** This requires further study."

Even though R. Falk remains unsatisfied with his explanation, it is clear to him that the mitzvah of Hanukkah candles is not an obligation on each individual person, but an obligation upon the home, that there be a candle lit at the entrance.

The relationship between the mitzvah and the home is further clarified later on in the *gemara* (*Shabbat* 23a):

R. Yirmiyah says: **one who sees Hanukkah candles must make a blessing.** R. Yehuda says: on the first night, one who sees must make two blessings, and one lighting must recite three blessings. Afterward, one who lights recites two blessings and one who sees recites one blessing.

What is the purpose of this special enactment requiring one who sees the Hanukkah candles of another to recite a blessing? What other mitzvah entails reciting a blessing when seeing someone else's performance of a mitzvah?

Rashi (*ad loc.*) explains that the enactment is for those people who have not yet lit their own candles or are on a boat:

"one who sees" – **one who is passing through the market place** and sees lit candles **in one of the courtyards.** I have found in the name of Rabbenu Yitzhak b. Yehuda, who says in the name of Rabbenu Yaakov, **that this blessing is only required of one who did not yet light in his own house or who is sitting on a boat.**

Some wonder why Rashi mentioned the person on a boat. Why would he be different from any other person who had not yet lit? They infer therefore that, according to Rashi, has a different

problem: a boat is not a home, and one cannot light Hanukkah candles with the blessings unless he is in a home. This opinion is explicitly stated in Tosafot (*Sukkah* 46a, s.v. "*ha-ro'eh*"):

With regard to other *mitzvot*, such as *lulav* and *sukkah*, the sages did not enact a blessing for one who sees it. Only with regards to seeing the Hanukkah candles, because the miracle is beloved, and also because **there are people who do not have homes and are therefore unable to fulfill the mitzva...**

The second reason mentioned by Tosafot, that the enactment was made for homeless people who could not otherwise perform the mitzvah, is echoed by many *Acharonim* who understand that in order to fulfill the mitzvah one must have a home. Thus, the determination that lighting candles is an obligation of the house.

Further clarification is still required, though. If the main function of Hanukkah candles is the publicizing of the miracle, why does the mitzvah depend on the home? Why can't homeless people light where the masses can see the candles, thereby publicizing the miracle?

Perhaps we can answer this in more of a midrashic vein. The main purpose of decrees of the Greeks was to destroy the modesty and sanctity of the Jewish home. They decreed that Jews take the doors off their homes, so that husbands and wives would have no privacy; ultimately they enacted the *jus primae noctis* – that every bride was required to sleep with the hegemon first. This precipitated the rebellion and eventually the victory over the Greeks. Therefore there is a special relationship between the publicizing of the miracle and the Jewish home.

## **B. What is considered a home for the purposes of this mitzvah?**

The basis for answering this question is found in *Responsa Maharsham* (4:146). He was asked, more than a century ago, whether one can fulfill his obligation of lighting Hanukkah candles while traveling on a long journey by train. Is the train considered a home? This is his response:

To answer your question from the second day of Hanukkah, whether it is permitted to light Hanukkah candles on a train: I have not found anything explicit. **But someone who pays for the entire night is like one who pays rent for a house to eat and sleep in** and is therefore obligated to light Hanukkah candles. **And what Rashi writes regarding one who is sitting on a boat, perhaps he refers to unroofed boats that do not protect from the cold or wind, which cannot be considered like a home.** Even though a train does not stand in one place, and riding is like walking, we do not find that a house must be stationary, for the mitzvah is to publicize the miracle. This is my understanding and rationale.

His responsum teaches that the obligation to light Hanukkah candles depends on something that has the status of a home. A boat without a roof, which cannot stand up to a common wind, is not a home, as was explained by Rashi. But a train car is considered a home even when it is moving.

Some *Acharonim* explain that derive the definition of a “home” for the purpose of lighting Hanukkah candles from the definition of a home for the purpose of affixing a *mezuzah* – and a space smaller than four *amot* by four *amot* is not considered a home. However, R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach discusses this question at length and rejects this equation, arguing that for the purpose of

Hanukkah candles, even a space smaller than four *amot* by four *amot* is a home (*Responsa Minhag Shlomo Tinyana* 2/3:48): **"here too it is sufficient to have a temporary home ..."**

Nevertheless he remains in doubt about whether or not the house requires a roof and a minimal size of seven *tefahim* by seven *tefahim* and a height of ten *tefahim*:

**Nevertheless, regarding the doubt whether a home that has no roof, does not contain ten *tefahim*, or is smaller than seven *tefahim* by seven *tefahim* is even considered a temporary home, it may render one who lights there akin to one who lights outside, and not in a home. However, it is possible that "home" means only a space that is considered to be his, as opposed to the street or the synagogue. Therefore, perhaps even in a place that does not meet the requirements of a temporary home, but it is a separate domain, it is effective...**

### **C. According to this, what is the status of (small) pup tents and APCs?**

Pup tents are smaller than four *amot* by four *amot*. The way in which the tents are built, they may not even be seven *tefahim* by seven *tefahim* with a height of ten *tefahim*. Tents in the south are often built on sand and cannot stand up to a common wind.

Therefore, one who is living in a pup tent on Hanukkah is not obligated to light candles and should not light with the blessings. R. Avidan (in *Shabbat U-mo'ed Be-tzava*, pp. 332-333) cites R. Elyashiv as saying not to recite the blessings over Hanukkah candles

in pup tents. This is also the opinion of R. Eliyahu (and, I have heard, the opinion of R. Lior).

But if they bring to the field tents big enough to sleep four soldiers, then it is four *amot* by four *amot*, or other tents that are sufficiently large, then the tent is considered a home, even if it is temporary.

An APC is considered a home according to all opinions. It is four *amot* by four *amot*. It is best to light the candles while the ramp is closed, next to the rear entrance door. A tank is also considered a home, especially the Merkavah tank which has a square door in the back.

#### **D. Safety**

If one is lighting next to the door of a tent in order to publicize the miracle, the candle must be in a glass aquarium so that the candles do not cause a fire in the tent. In an APC which has explosive materials of any kind, it is forbidden to light candles for fear that it might cause an explosion. Sometimes during reserve duty, there is no explosive material on the vehicle. In that case, it is permitted to light within a *tefah* of the door to the APC or tank.

#### **Summary**

1. If one lights in a place not defined as a home, he should not recite the blessings.
2. Regarding the definition of a home: a pup tent is not considered a home, but an APC is.
3. If there is no alternative, it is permissible to light candles without the blessing, in order to publicize the miracle.

4. One who has lit candles near the tent door in order to publicize the miracle, without the blessing, must put the candles in a glass aquarium to prevent the tent from catching fire. In an APC that has explosives in it, it is forbidden to light any candles for fear that it will cause an explosion.
5. Soldiers should ask family members to light at home on their behalf (this applies whether married or single, Ashkenazi or Mizrahi).
6. When lighting the Hanukkah candles, one should think about the sanctity of the Jewish home, which started a revolution and caused a miracle to happen for the Jewish people. It is also important to think about the great miracle and tremendous opportunity we have in returning to our land, reestablishing the State of Israel in the spirit of the Hasmoneans, and, like them, serving in a Jewish army to defend the Jewish people.

## About the "Meir Harel" Hesder Yeshiva

# THE SPIRIT OF THE MACCABEES HAS RETURNED TO MODIIN

## THE CITY OF MODIIN

Since the founding of the State of Israel there have been several attempts to re-establish the ancient city of Modiin. Finally, in 5756 (1996) the city began to be populated, and since then Modiin continues its robust development. Today, there are about 80,000 residents and the city plans include a population of 120,000.



The site on which the city was established has spiritual, historical and national importance. The ancient village of Modiin was the home of the Maccabees, and the base from which they set out to fight - against impossible odds - for the sake of the Torah, *mitzvot* and the Temple in Jerusalem. This region is a symbol of the spirit of the verse, "Not by might, and not by power, but by my spirit, says G-d."

## THE MEIR HAREL HESDER YESHIVA

The yeshiva's goal is to become a lighthouse of Torah and spirituality for Modiin and the surrounding communities. Approximately 200 students, teachers, Rabbis and community educators study, teach and run community outreach programs at the Meir Harel Hesder Yeshiva, which is currently housed in temporary buildings.



Construction of a permanent Beit Midrash, lecture halls and dormitories is in the planning stages.

The Meir Harel Hesder Yeshiva considers itself part of the natural fabric of Modiin. Our rabbis and students regularly initiate many activities geared toward bringing the religious Zionist spirit to the community, as well as toward aiding in immigrant absorption. The cooperation between the yeshiva and members of the community, religious and non-religious, is having positive results.

For example, we have a Bar Mitzva program in which over 200 boys from non-religious families take part every year. It all started five years ago, when parents from Modiin came to the Meir Harel Hesder Yeshiva looking for someone to help with



preparations for their son's Bar Mitzvah. One of the yeshiva students obliged and prepared the boy - and his family - every step of the way. Then, another family came with the same request, and another, and another....

## **INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE TO EXCELLENCE AS SOLDIERS AND COMMANDERS IN THE IDF**

The fundamental innovation and uniqueness of the Meir Harel Hesder Yeshiva is its extended six-year program. This encourages students to choose longer and more significant military service, including officer training, as well as enabling them to spend more time



learning Torah. The results are evident. Today, six years since the establishment of the yeshiva, approximately two thirds of our students take up command responsibilities during their IDF service.

## THE OVERSEAS STUDENTS INSPIRING LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**TORAH:** The Yeshiva aims to create students who approach the study of Torah with enthusiasm and eagerness because they have a grasp of its fundamentals. The Yeshiva also seeks to provide its students with the essential tools necessary to recall learned material, not just for the present, but for living a Torah life in adulthood.



### **HEBREW & INTEGRATION:**

The program is a gradually integrating program that helps the overseas students step by step develop their Hebrew through Ulpan classes and Israeli English speaking Chevrutot. Shiurim are given in English and gradually move to Hebrew helping the students integrate into the Yeshivat Heder. Each Student will be adopted by an English speaking family in Modiin that will ease their stay away from home.



### **PERSONAL ATTENTION:**

Much of the learning in the yeshiva is done in small groups, giving personal attention to each student. The staff builds a close and personal relationship with each student and helps direct them in their own path. An integral part of the daily schedule is the Chevruta with Israeli students. This further enhances their Hebrew language skills, is an outstanding learning experience and



brings them into contact with the cream of orthodox Israeli youth.

**LEADERSHIP:** A fundamental belief of the Meir Harel Yeshiva is that training Jewish leadership is part of a Torah life and an essential need of this generation. We also believe that leadership is built through actions. Therefore we have developed a program that does not simply develop leadership but also equips our students with the skills required to be effective leaders.



We believe that building the personality of a Torah leader includes:

- Learning inspirational leadership and learning special skills required for successful group leading.
- Making a connection with the community, volunteering and performing Chessed projects.
- Current event discussions and Israel advocacy training.



**AND MORE:**

In addition to all these, the program includes:  
Monthly Shabbatonim in Jerusalem, Zefat, The Golan and more,  
Monthly and during Bein Hazmanim Tiyyulim all over Israel  
A special army experience program, And much more.



**For more information about the yeshiva and our programs**

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