



# THE JEWISH HOLIDAY MAGAZINE farbrenngen

Volume 14 | Issue 2

Winter 5772/2011

a little nosh for the soul

**The Light Issue**  
See Chanukah in a  
Whole New Light



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*“Our sages teach us that the reason Man was created single was to demonstrate how one person equals a whole world. This means that each Jew, regardless of time and place and personal status, has the fullest capacity to rise and attend the highest of degree of fulfillment for himself, and to bring the rest of the world to its fulfillment as well; indeed it is his duty to do so.”*

*The Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
Rabbi, M.M. Schneersan o.b.m.*

## farbrengen

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## LETTER FROM THE RABBI



*Dearest Reader,*

Dear Friends,

Chanukah, the Festival of Light, is among the most widely celebrated of Jewish Holidays. It is a time for family gatherings around the menorah, for children’s songs, sizzling potato latkes and games of ‘Dreidel.’ For many of us, it brings back fond childhood memories and renews our sense of Jewish identify.

Yet Chanukah is rarely appreciated for its full significance. In truth, Chanukah represents the very core of our Jewishness, it is Judaism’s ultimate Holiday.

Each of the Jewish festivals represent a central aspect in Jewish life – on Passover we were granted our freedom; on Shavuos we received the Torah; on Sukkos we celebrate G-d’s watchful protection of us; on Purim we celebrate Jewish unity – on Chanukah we celebrate the purity of the Jewish soul and the sensitivity of the Torah – the very essence of the Torah, sensed by the purity of the soul.

Chanukah is the festival of light. Light is unique in that it is unchangeable. It shines equally on a diamond as on a pebble. It is intangible and the most undefined of all creatures. It is unaffected by its surroundings. Even when it seems to have adapted a specific color, just remove the medium through which it shines, and it will return to its original clear color.

Herein lies the essence and the significance of Chanukah.

The Greeks, who were great philosophers, believed only in what they could intellectually grasp or physically sense. Along with their intellectualism, they developed a culture of sports and body development.

As far as Judaism, the Greeks were prepared to accept the mitzvot as part of a great culture, and the Torah, a great work of Jewish literature. What they could not fathom or tolerate was the pure Jewish belief in an infinite G-d, the devotion to Torah study, not as an intellectual exercise, but as a holy Torah, G-d’s Torah, and observing mitzvot, not because it made sense, but merely because it’s G-d’s commandment that connect us to Him. In the words of the prayer recited on Chanukah, the Greeks set out to have the Jews forget “G-d’s Torah,” and to cease observing “G-d’s commandments.”

What Judaism is all about and what helped us survive and thrive through the millennia, is not our great intellect and human morals, rather it is the purity of faith, the devotion to G-d and the absolute adherence to His commandments under all circumstances.

This is what Chanukah is all about. A small and weak group of Jews fighting a mighty Greek army to uphold the intangible and sublime against all odds. G-d responded by rewarding them with the impossible – a miraculous victory.

And then, G-d rewarded them with the miracle of light – representative of the “candle of mitzvah and the light of Torah.”

\* \* \*

In the following pages you’ll find – in addition to the history, observance, and inner meaning of the Chanukah events and celebration – contemporary stories of hope and light, truly expressing the Chanukah blessing “For the miracles [which G-d has performed] in those days, at this time.”

Sincerely,

**Rabbi Kasriel Shemtov**

Spiritual Director

Best wishes for a very happy Chanukah

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BY SHIRA GOLD

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**>>9 CTEEN.COM** The Chabad Teen Network's site offers teens from across the globe a chance to come together and unite. The site just announced the upcoming International Teen Shabbat in New York City and keeps teens updated on local Jewish events and clubs. Quickly tweet this site to your teen friends.

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# Shedding Light on Chanukah Gelt

BY RABBI CHAIM SILVER

**CHANUKAH GELT GOT ME THINKING ABOUT MONEY. IS IT BETTER TO BE RICH OR BETTER TO BE POOR? DOES LUXURY ENHANCE OUR SPIRITUALITY OR IS FILTHY RICH A BAD THING?**

Some great thinkers in recent history have sung the virtues of poverty, as if to say, that the less material wealth you own somehow makes you more spiritual. But my own mother never really subscribed to that school of thought. She wanted me to get a job and she made that clear.

My classmate Eli from Rabbinical College spoke about joining the Israeli army, or perhaps, joining an international human rights group that was bringing running water to villages near Sumatra. But he didn't make a move on either. Yet his subconscious soul must have heard the calling of a modern sage "Money, money, money, it's a rich man's world."

Eli now works at one of New York's top IP firms. In simple terms, that means he wears his Shabbat suit all week and protects paying people's ability to use certain techniques or words while other guys our age claim otherwise and, of course, vice versa. So, one night at exactly 11:42pm Eli found himself again still in the office and he called me asking; Why? Does G-d really want me to make some extra cash?

Eli is a supporter of our Hebrew School in Lakeview and told him I would do some good old Talmudic research on the matter. This is what I found:

Basically, the forms of work and wealth have both evolved over the years, but their souls are still very much the same. Some two-thousand years ago, the authors of the Mishna wrote about the work-wealth relationship: "Such is the way of Torah: Bread with salt shall you eat and water in small measure shall you drink and on the ground shall you sleep and a life of austerity shall you live—and in the Torah you shall toil. If you do so, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you: "You shall be happy" in this world; "and it shall be well with you"—in the World to Come."

Honestly, I can afford bread and salt without working overtime, and apparently a Torah cruise to Alaska with five-star accommodations seems to be openly shunned by the authors of the Ethics of our Fathers. But, thank G-d for Talmudic commentary. There's no need to cancel your 401-k.

You see, the same great sages also wrote that "Beauty, strength, wealth, honor, wisdom... are good for the righteous and [when possessed by the righteous are] good for the world..."

According to a great scholar called the Chida, the former Mishna is not advocating asceticism. Rather, it means to say, that the way of Torah is such that you should be so absorbed in your spiritual mission that you become oblivious to all physical desires. It's only natural, that once you become truly engrossed in Torah, you won't notice the yacht.

**“...the way of Torah is such that you should be so absorbed in your spiritual mission that you become oblivious to all physical desires. It’s only natural, that once you become truly engrossed in Torah, you won’t notice the yacht.”**

Sure, the truly righteous person might yearn to be free of the material world and the distractions caused by vacations homes, angry tenants, brutal gossip columnists. Nonetheless, the latter Mishna assures us that these qualities, including wealth, will not ruin the man—they are good for him. Indeed you have no right to turn them down, since they are good for the world—you possess them for the world’s benefit.

Perhaps it’s a rich man’s world in the sense that all those wads of cash in foreign banks are for “the world’s benefit.”

On a personal note to G-d, I would study more, pray more, and be a better Jew, if I had Mark Zuckerberg’s money. Who wouldn’t? In a recent survey, 74% of Americans said they would spend more time on their personal spirituality if they didn’t have to work for a living.

Yet, working hard to make a living just might be a good thing, and you may want to think twice before you quit your job.

In 1851 a sfardic kabbalist named the Ben Ish Chai wrote about the troubles caused by the “easy life” versus the pleasures of the life of toil:

Two donkeys are carrying a load. One is carrying a load of salt and suffering under its weight; the other is carrying a load of nearly weightless sponge and going along joyfully, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.

After a few hours they reach a river that they must cross. As soon as the first donkey enters the river, the salt begins to melt and in just moments is gone. The sack is empty and the donkey is walking through the river joyful and light. The other donkey enters the water and his load of sponge is filled with much water that weighs unbearably upon the donkey. The sponge that formerly was its friend has suddenly become its worst enemy.

Think about it: If you had a personal chef and a beach front home with no job or bills, what would you do all day? (Some lucky fellows are actually working this one out, and it’s a tough one.)

Therefore, in my final analysis of Chanukah Gelt and rich vs. poor, after I’ve seen both sides of the proverbial chocolate coin, it’s apparent that wealth holds the power to change the world and fulfill the very purpose of creation. The rabbis certainly knew that money is a challenge we must face and wealth is a force we must harness in our global effort to heal a broken world.

**SO, FOR G-D’S SAKE, GET A JOB AND MAKE SOME REAL MONEY!**

Rabbi Chaim Silver graduated from the Rabbinical Seminary of New Jersey and now lives with his wife Miriam in Lakeview, CA.



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# How to perform a Miracle

A UNIQUE CONVERSATION WITH THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE IN 1968

Anyone who had the good fortune to meet the Rebbe during his lifetime can relate the unparalleled attention and love that he offered each individual, regardless of background, situation or degree of religious involvement. Whether they came for blessing, advice, or encouragement, men and women from all walks of life found solace in the Rebbe's kind words and luminous visage. Anyone who stood in his presence - even for a moment - could not leave without being deeply affected, if not changed by their encounter, an extraordinary experience that people carry with them to this day.

The following is an excerpt of a meeting between a group of college students and the Rebbe held on March 7th 1960. It's The unique conversation sheds new light on the nature of a miracle. The Rebbe began with introductory remarks:

This year has special significance, being the 200th anniversary of the Histalkus of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of general Chasidism.

The word histalkus does not mean death in the sense of coming to an end but rather an elevation from one level to another on a higher

plane. When one has accomplished his mission in life, he is elevated to a higher plane. The significance of this for us is that everyone can now lift himself easier to a higher level by studying the teachings

of the Baal Shem Tov and taking an example from his life.

From the very beginning, one of the first things the Baal Shem Tov did was teach small children simple things like blessings and to explain to them how they could be near to G-d Almighty -- that G-d was very real for them

**A miracle is something that happens which you could not have calculated. When a Jew connects himself through his Divine spark with G-d through fervent prayer, Torah, and Mitzvos, he can affect things in this physical world "from above" -- that means by a way which is beyond calculation.**

and close to them and not far-removed in some "seventh heaven." He worked not only with teenagers but even with six- and seven-year-old children, making them understand how G-d Almighty watches over them all the time -- not only Sunday, Monday or Tuesday, but all the days of their life, and that by obeying G-d's will they would be assured of a happy and harmonious life, materially and spiritually.

The epoch of the Baal Shem Tov came after the Chmielnitzky pogroms, which left the Jews in a state of dejection and despair. It was the aim of the Baal Shem Tov to encourage the Jews and to show them how they could meet the problems of their day while living a life of Torah and Mitzvos.

Our present age is similar in many ways to the times of the Baal Shem Tov. One-third of the Jewish population has perished under Hitler and has been cut off from us. How great, then, is the obligation that lies upon each and every one of us to do as much within his power to spread the light of Torah and Mitzvos in his own surroundings and throughout the world in general.

The Rebbe paused for questions and asked whether the students preferred to first ask all their questions and then he would answer, or did they want each question answered as it was asked. The latter was decided upon and the students began:

**Question: The Rebbe said that one should spread Torah. How and in what manner is this to be done?**

Rebbe: Everyone must do as much as possible in his immediate surroundings by speaking with other people in a way that shows his certainty and confidence in the matter. For confidence is a characteristic of the youth specifically. An older person is often beset with doubts and hesitations, while the young are sure of themselves. It is this characteristic that we must utilize in spreading Torah and Mitzvos, and everyone must work at 100% capacity.

Every means must be employed: the newspaper, the radio. But, above all, the most vital is the personal example we set in our everyday living.

**Question: What was the role that the Baal Shem Tov played in the Chasidic movement?**

Rebbe: We can understand what the Baal Shem Tov did by the simile of the relationship of an electric powerhouse with a lamp that is connected to it by a wire. In order to light his lamp, one must find the right switch, or push the correct button. The soul of every Jew is a part of and is connected with G-d Almighty, but in order



that one can enjoy the great benefits of it, the correct switch must be found or the proper button pushed. It was the Baal Shem Tov's mission to explain and proclaim that every Jew without exception is connected with "the powerhouse," and every one of them has a switch in his innermost, that will be found if searched for.

So also every one of us in our own work in strengthening Judaism must try to find the switch in the soul of every Jew. One can never know what will make the connection, perhaps one word. But by this, you open up the well or inner fountain of his soul.

**Question: What is the function of a Rebbe?**

Rebbe: As was said earlier, to find the switch in every Jew and help him become connected with the powerhouse.

**Question: How far does the power of the Rebbe extend in natural law? Does the Rebbe have preferred status as regards prayer?**

[Someone added that what is meant is whether the Rebbe can perform miracles.]

Rebbe: This world is not separate from the higher worlds but is another step, the last one, in a long chain of worlds.

Everything in this world comes from and is influenced by the higher ones. A miracle is something that happens which you could not have calculated. When a Jew connects himself through his Divine spark with G-d through fervent prayer, Torah, and Mitzvos, he can affect things in this physical world "from above" -- that means by a way which is beyond calculation. This power is not the prerogative of one Jew but of every Jew.

Rabbi Gurewitz, of the Brooklyn Hillel Foundation, thanked the Rebbe for the interview and started to leave, but then the Rebbe said:

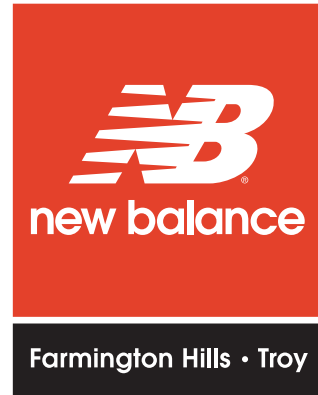
Now I want to ask you a question, and at the same time try to perform a miracle.

Everything has a purpose. What was the purpose of our coming together here tonight? Certainly it was not merely to ask questions and receive answers, good or bad. Rather it was to achieve something.

All of us here are young, myself included, and have tens of years yet before us. Since six million of our people in Russia, Poland and Hungary have been lost to us through Hitler, we have a special task to accomplish -- the work that they could have done, at least a major part of it.

Everyone counts. No Jew is expendable. We all must work to the fullest capacity, every one of us. In our day-to-day life we must use our full strength to add to the side of good, and by this we will gain a life of happiness and harmony -- and all this can be done only through a life of Torah and Mitzvos tested by our 3,500 year history. This obligation lies upon every Jew and G-d has given him the power to carry this through successfully.

And if each of us, beginning tomorrow, should add in his own personal life more Torah and Mitzvos and influence the environment in the same direction, if we all will do this, myself included, this indeed will be our miracle.



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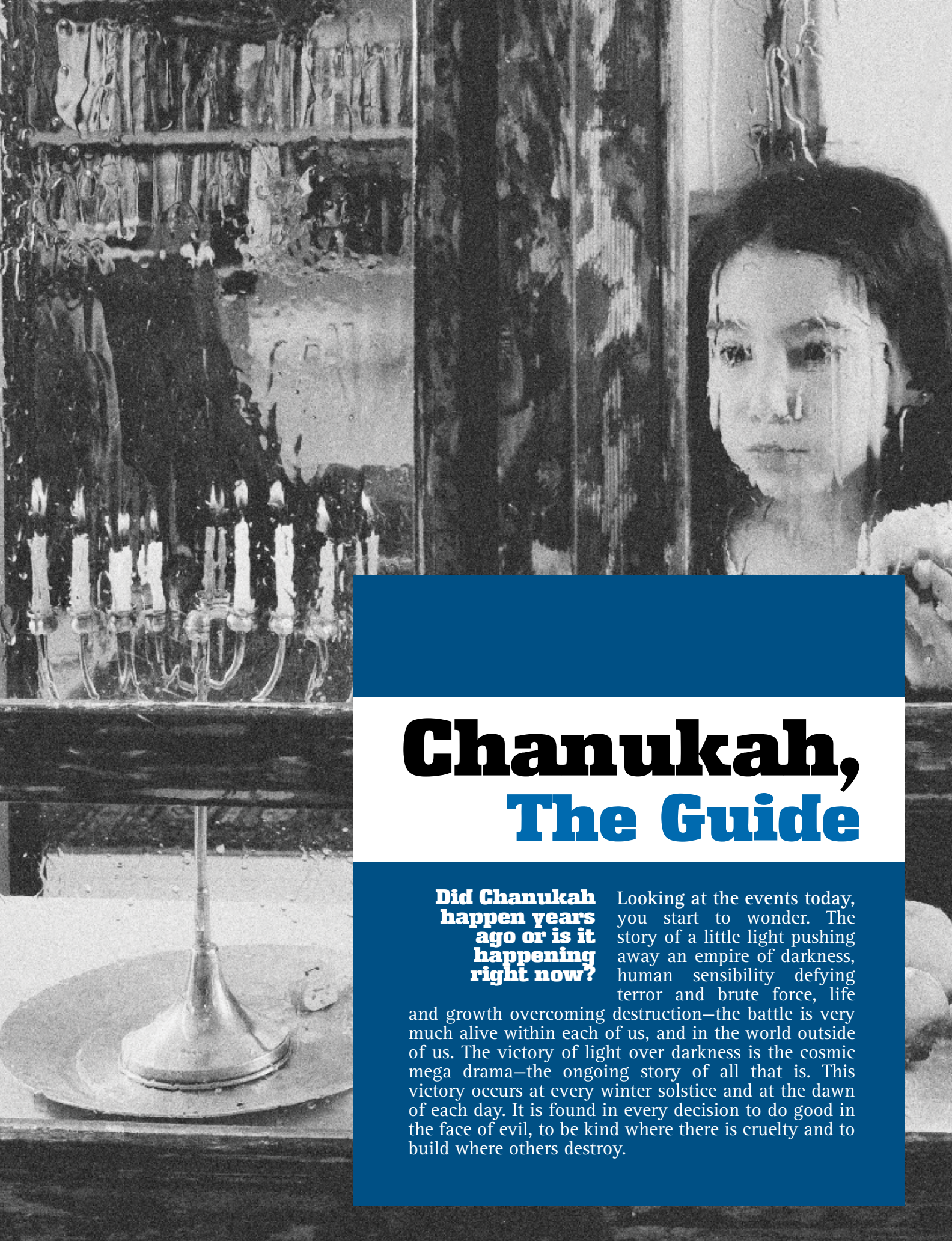
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# Chanukah, The Guide

**Did Chanukah  
happen years  
ago or is it  
happening  
right now?**

Looking at the events today, you start to wonder. The story of a little light pushing away an empire of darkness, human sensibility defying terror and brute force, life and growth overcoming destruction—the battle is very much alive within each of us, and in the world outside of us. The victory of light over darkness is the cosmic mega drama—the ongoing story of all that is. This victory occurs at every winter solstice and at the dawn of each day. It is found in every decision to do good in the face of evil, to be kind where there is cruelty and to build where others destroy.

Chanukah is more than a holiday; it is an eight-day spiritual journey. In this tradition, we present Chanukah in a New Light. Many people know the story of Chanukah, the triumph of a small group of Jews who challenged their Greek oppressors and a little oil that miraculously kindled the lights of the menorah for eight days. The spirit of Chanukah is experienced when we apply its joy, warmth and light to our lives—not only in our homes with our loved ones, but with the entire world.

### **175 BCE**

Alexander the Great was the leader of the Greek Empire who by the age of 21 had conquered most of the known world. He respected the Jews. He didn't want to wage war against tiny Judea; he only required heavy taxes. The Talmud details many conversations that young Alexander had with the Jewish Sages, many of whom traveled to Greece to tutor royalty.

After Alexander's death, the Greek empire was split into three territories: Greece, Egypt and Syria. In 175 B.C.E., Antiochus IV rose to power over the Syrian territories, which included Israel. The Syrian Greeks, called Seleucids, were not interested in co-existence, but in assimilation.

The Talmud, the Book of the Maccabees, Josephus and other works detail the events of Chanukah. Antiochus IV sent his ministers to force Greek culture on the people of Israel. Most Jews conformed. What else could they do against the might of the empire? The Zohar says of this period: "The Greeks darkened the eyes of Israel with their decrees."

The festival of Chanukah is about light overcoming darkness. Our world is currently experiencing a particularly dark time. We have become apprehensive, even about opening the letters in our mailbox. Our sons, daughters, friends and neighbors are halfway around the world, fighting an enemy that has no borders.

"The soul of man is a lamp of G-d" (Proverbs 23:27). Our challenge, whether we are on the front lines or fighting rush hour at home, is to bring light into the world. The reason the Chanukah candles are lit after nightfall is to remind us that even in our darkest moments, we have the potential to illuminate if we kindle a flame.

### **Spiritual Annihilation**

Antiochus IV, called Epiphanies (the Illustrious) by his friends and Epimanes (the Madman) by his enemies, did not build ghettos, force conversions or set out to annihilate the Jewish people, as Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar had plotted before him. Neither did he intend to destroy their culture. Instead, he outlawed the observance of specific mitzvot (Divine actions), predicting that when the Jews would cease to observe these precepts, it would lead to the end of Judaism as a unique religion and nation. He wanted the Jews to be just another conquered tribe. And so, he declared war against their souls.

The Greeks were great philosophers. They acknowledged the mitzvot as part of a great culture, and the Torah as a great work of Jewish literature. What they would not tolerate was that "G-d, Creator of the Universe, ordained the practice of these mitzvot." In the words of the prayer recited on Chanukah, the Greeks set out to have the Jews forget "[G-d's] Torah," and to cease observing "[G-d's] commandments."

Whenever we do a mitzvah, we become G-d's autograph on His masterpiece, declaring for all that this is not a jungle where the strong

devour the weak. It is a beautiful garden, filled with the light of its Creator.

### **War and Peace**

Hellenism, the Greek culture, meant accepting its pagan gods and Greek philosophy. Jews who were sympathetic to the Hellenistic view quickly gained power and prominence. But many Jews remained loyal to their beliefs. Eliezer, a Kohen (Jewish priest), was executed because he refused to abandon his Jewish faith. Many Jewish women were murdered for having their sons circumcised. Seven sons of Chana, a simple Jewish woman, were put to death for refusing to bow down to pagan gods.

The big trouble for the Seleucids began in the village of Mod'in, when the aged Kohen Mattisyahu cried out, "Whoever is for G-d, join me!" Thus, the fight for religious freedom began.

King Solomon wrote, "Everything has its season ... A time to be born, a time to die ... A time for war, a time for peace" (Ecclesiastes). In Judaism, peace is the ultimate goal. Yet if one is being attacked, Jewish law forbids a passive stance. Peace and the sanctity of human life require, at times, that one must defend one's self, one's family and one's country.

Despite the fact that the Maccabees were fewer in strength and in numbers, they stood up against the oppressor with complete faith in G-d's mercy. One lesson of Chanukah is that when we resolve to introduce spirituality into our lives, G-d assists us well beyond our limitations. G-d tells His children, "Make for Me a small opening, like the eye of a needle, and I will open for you an opening through which caravans can enter" (Midrash). We simply need to begin the process for G-d to help us attain that which we perceived as unattainable.

### **Pure Light**

Antiochus IV outlawed three specific mitzvot and rendered their practice punishable by death. These mitzvot were "Shabbat," which is a testimony to the fact that there is a Creator Who rested on the seventh day; "Blessing the New Month," which determines when Jews can sanctify their holidays; and "Circumcision," which imbues holiness into the human body. The spiritual ghetto that Antiochus IV tried to force on the Jewish people was a world without a Creator, time without sanctity and people with no connection to the Divine.

Though a person might have a burning desire to be spiritual, a concrete action is needed to ignite a flame. Lacking the oil of genuine substance, one's passion can quickly fade, failing to introduce any enduring light into the world. A life without mitzvot is like a wick without oil—it yields little or no light.

There are nine branches on the Chanukah menorah, even though Chanukah is celebrated for eight days. The ninth branch is the shamash, the "servant" candle, which stands apart from the other candles. This candle is lit so that when we make use of the Chanukah light, we do so from the shamash, and not from the eight Chanukah flames.

"...These [eight Chanukah] flames are kodesh (holy). We are not permitted to make use of them, only to gaze at them" (Chanukah liturgy).

The Hebrew word "kodesh" literally means separate

and beyond. In Judaism, although we can appreciate holy objects and observances on many levels, they are essentially higher than our finite understanding and perception, since they are rooted in the Infinite. It was this “holiness” that the Greeks failed to destroy. And it is this holiness that is manifested in the lights of Chanukah.

### **The War**

Mattisyahu the Kohen, and his five sons, began to challenge the Greek strongholds with a group of followers called the Maccabees. Historical sources estimate their numbers at 6,000, while Antiochus IV sent 40,000 troops to overwhelm them. Yehudis, a young widow, used cunning tactics to assassinate Holofernes, a vicious Seleucid general. After significant losses in the cities of Shechem and Beit Choron, Antiochus IV sent an additional 65,000 troops. The Maccabees fought bitter, yet intelligent, battles that are studied by military tacticians to this very day. After three years and thousands of lives, Israel was finally free.

On Chanukah, we celebrate two miracles: the victory of the Maccabees over the forces of Antiochus IV in the battlefield, and the miracle of the oil which burned for eight days. The victory in the battlefield was miraculous, but it was physical, limited by time and space. The miracle of the oil, which enabled the Jewish people to resume the service in the holy Temple, was spiritual. Jews around the world emulate this miracle and spirituality today by observing Chanukah.

The Chanukah struggle is found within each of us. Chasidic teachings explain that we have two souls. One soul is drawn to the spiritual, the other to the physical. We may reconcile this duality by being involved with the material world, but toward a spiritual end. This is one reason why there are so many mitzvot in the Torah, all of them involving physical action. When the physical is engaged for spiritual purposes, the conflict is transformed into peace and harmony. A world of peace begins with inner peace. When one makes peace within, it has an effect on his or her home, environment and eventually the entire world.

### **The Soul of a Flame**

The name “Chanukah” is rooted in several different, yet related, sources. It comes from “kah,” the Hebrew equivalent of 25, and “chanu,” meaning rest. It is also connected with the words “inauguration” (chanukat) and “education” (chinuch).

On the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, the Maccabees rested from their battle. They marched victoriously into the holy Temple in Jerusalem, ready to inaugurate the holy service. They would forever serve as role models, or educators, to future generations.

What does a soul look like? Look at the flame of a candle. A flame is bright, jumping, never resting; the natural desire of a soul is to “jump up” to G-d, to break free of physical limitations. The wick and candle anchor a flame; a physical body grounds the soul, forcing the soul to do its job, to give light and warmth. The human body, precious and holy, is likened to the holy Temple. The Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chasidism, always advised against asceticism, fasts and hurting the body. Better, he would say, to use your body to perform a deed of kindness.

Kindness is contagious. When our soul tells our body to do a kind deed, both the soul and body are affected. Eventually, other souls around us awaken and influence their bodies to do the same. Before long, we create an international epidemic of kindness. This is one reason why the Chanukah menorah is placed

where it can be seen from the street, either in the doorway across from the mezuzah or near a window, reminding us of our duty to share the spiritual light of warmth and wisdom with our surroundings.

### **Untouchable**

Victory turned bittersweet when the Maccabees found that the Temple was desecrated and the pure oil needed to light the menorah was defiled. Miraculously, the Maccabees discovered a single jar of pure oil, with the seal of the Kohen Gadol (Jewish high priest) intact. With this oil, the Holy Temple was reinaugurated.

Why didn't the Seleucids just destroy the oil, as opposed to defiling it? Oil is a symbol for holiness. It can permeate anything. Yet when placed in water, it rises to the top. Defiled, not destroyed, oil is exactly what Antiochus IV wanted. He allowed the Jews to adhere to their culture and keep their laws, as long as it was “touched” by the Greek ideals and philosophy.

Chasidic teachings explain that despite any entity that tries to sever our connection to G-dliness, the essence of a soul can never be defiled. This spark of holiness continuously burns and longs to be fanned into a great flame. The universe was created to perpetuate light, and it is inherently good (Genesis). But there are times when darkness invades G-d's

world. At such times, we search for the hidden “single jar of pure oil” (Chanukah liturgy), the pure and indestructible spark of Creation, which radiates goodness and holiness.

### **The Eighth Night**

The Maccabees had done all that was physically possible, but the small jar of oil was only enough to light the candles of the menorah for one day. To prepare more oil would require a process of at least seven days. After defeating the world's most powerful army and gaining religious freedom for generations to come, the Maccabees were not about to give up. They lit the menorah with the little oil they found, and miraculously, the menorah shone for eight days, plus 2000 years, as Chanukah continues to illuminate our home and world today.

However miraculous their victory, some would attribute the Maccabean military success to their superior strategy. The last night of the holiday is called Zot Chanukah, “This is Chanukah.” Our Sages explain that “zot” refers to something when it is revealed and tangible, “when it can be pointed to with a finger.” When the Jewish people witnessed a scientific impossibility, the miracle of the oil, there was no denying G-d's presence.

Why does G-d perform miracles? Without miracles, such as the oil found in the holy Temple, one might believe that the laws of physics define reality. However, once we see the inexplicable, we witness a transcendent reality and attain a higher consciousness. We can then look back at physics, point with our finger and realize, “This too is a miracle.”

The Baal Shem Tov said, “The difference between nature and a miracle is the frequency.”

The Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism, teaches that the ultimate miracle is not the splitting of the sea, manna from heaven, or the sun standing still. It is described as the subtle and, at the same time, dramatic transformation of the universe that will occur with the arrival of Moshiach. At that time, nature itself will uncover its miraculous essence. What is now perceived as a wall between the physical and spiritual will be revealed as a bridge. How can we bring about this miracle? With the light of our collective mitzvot.

## Lighting a Menorah



A Chanukah menorah has eight candle holders in one straight row of equal height. The shamash (servant candle)—an additional candle which is used to light the menorah—is placed higher or set aside from the others. A menorah which uses electric candles can be used as a Chanukah decoration, but does not achieve the mitzvah of lighting the menorah.

Part of the Chanukah mitzvah is publicizing the

miracle of Chanukah, so we place the menorah in the doorway, opposite the mezuzah, or by a window, clearly visible to the outside. // Candles may be used, but because of its role in the Chanukah miracle, a menorah of oil is especially significant. // On Friday afternoon, we light the Chanukah candles just before the Shabbat candles. [On Shabbat, the holy day of rest, it

is prohibited to ignite a flame.) On Saturday, the Chanukah menorah is not lit until the end of Shabbat, after the Havdalah prayer is recited. // On the first night of Chanukah, before lighting the Shabbat candles, gather the family for the lighting of the menorah. Before lighting, say the appropriate blessings (see below). Use the shamash to light the first candle on your far right of the



## Games & Gelt > 3 Easy Steps to

### Kabbalah of Oil

To celebrate the miracle of the oil, it is traditional to eat fried foods, such as potato latkes (pancakes) and sufganiot (Israeli-style doughnuts). To produce oil, intense pressure is put on the olive. Chasidus explains that many times people experience pressures in life. Yet, “G-d does not overburden His creations.” The purpose of this pressure is to unleash one’s potential and hidden strength. // We also eat dairy products on Chanukah to commemorate the Jewish heroine, Yehudis. In 164 B.C.E., the Greek general Holofernes besieged the village of Bethulia. After intense fighting, Yehudis rebuked the town elders who were about to surrender. She then approached Holofernes to offer her services as a spy. She met Holofernes in his tent and offered him salty cheese, followed by wine to quench his thirst, causing him to fall asleep. Yehudis beheaded him and escaped. When the Greek soldiers found his corpse, they retreated in fear. Yehudis saved her village and countless lives with the help of a little cheese.

### Dreidel, a Short History.

The game of dreidel is one of the oldest recorded games in history. Around 170 B.C.E.,

the Greeks who occupied Israel deemed Jewish rituals punishable by death. Teachers and their students defiantly studied in secret and, when patrols came by, would pretend to be playing an innocent game. The dreidel (or sevivon in Hebrew) is a four-sided spinning top. A Hebrew letter is written on each side: Nun, Gimel, Hay and Shin, representing the phrase Nes Gadol Hayah Sham—A Great Miracle Happened There. In Israel, the Shin is replaced with a Peh, for the word “Po,” Here. // Each player begins with a certain amount of coins, candy or any kind of token. Each player puts a token into the pot. The youngest player often spins the dreidel first. The letter facing upward determines the payoff. Nun = nothing, Gimel = everything, Hay = half, Shin/Peh = add two tokens to the pot.



### Splurge on Charity

On Chanukah, it is traditional to give gelt (money) to children. Maimonides explains that the Greeks attempted to defile not only Jewish rituals, but also their property. The triumph of Chanukah is celebrated by giving gelt, often designated for charity.

Charity is one of the greatest mitzvot because a person puts time, energy, body and

|  |         |                 |
|--|---------|-----------------|
|  | Shamash |                 |
| <b>Tuesday, Dec. 20</b><br>After nightfall<br>Blessings No. 1, 2 & 3                           |         | 1               |
|  | Shamash |                 |
| <b>Wednesday, Dec. 21</b><br>After nightfall<br>Blessings No. 1 & 2                            |         | 1 2             |
|  | Shamash |                 |
| <b>Thursday, Dec. 22</b><br>After nightfall<br>Blessings No. 1 & 2                             |         | 1 2 3           |
|  | Shamash |                 |
| <b>Friday, Dec. 23</b><br>Before Shabbat<br>Candle Lighting<br>Blessings No. 1 & 2             |         | 1 2 3 4         |
|  | Shamash |                 |
| <b>Saturday, Dec. 24</b><br>After Shabbat Ends<br>& Havdalah is Recited<br>Blessings No. 1 & 2 |         | 1 2 3 4 5       |
|  | Shamash |                 |
| <b>Sunday, Dec. 25</b><br>After nightfall<br>Blessings No. 1 & 2                               |         | 1 2 3 4 5 6     |
|  | Shamash |                 |
| <b>Monday, Dec. 26</b><br>After nightfall<br>Blessings No. 1 & 2                               |         | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   |
|  | Shamash |                 |
| <b>Tuesday, Dec. 27</b><br>After nightfall<br>Blessings No. 1 & 2                              |         | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 |

### The Blessings

1 Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ho-olom A-she-ri Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-sov Vi-tzi-vo-no Le-had-lik Ner Cha-nu-kah.  
2 Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ho-olom She-o-so Ni-sim La-avo-sei-nu Bayo-mim Ho-heim Bi-z'man Ha-zeh.  
3 Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ho-olom She-heche-yo-nu Ve-ki-yi-mo-nu Ve-higi-o-nu Liz-man Ha-zeh.

Blessing #3 is only recited on the first evening (or the first time one kindles the lights this Chanukah).

### Hanairos Hallolu

We kindle these lights (to commemorate) the saving acts, miracles and wonders which You have performed for our forefathers, in those days at this time, through Your holy Kohanim. Throughout the eight days of Chanukah, these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make use of them, but only to look at them, in order to offer thanks and praise to Your great Name for Your miracles, for Your wonders and for Your salvations.

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# Spreading the Light

**The shul spreads the light of judaism, during Chanukah and throughout the year.**

RONELLE GRIER

As we celebrate the Jewish Festival of Lights, it is fitting that we also acknowledge our commitment to spread the light of Judaism, not just during the Chanukah season but all year long. The Shul has a variety of unique and innovative ways in which we endeavor to spread this light to Jews throughout our community, regardless of age or level of observance.

Bringing a spiritual connection to Jews all over the world is the foundation of the Lubavitch movement, and The Shul supports this mission by providing a wide variety of programs, classes, holiday celebrations, and religious services for men, women, babies, children, and teens. There is literally something for everyone.

A women's group provides opportunities for friendship and spiritual rejuvenation, while classes through the Emma Lazaroff Jewish Learning Institute offer intellectual stimulation and insight into various aspects of Jewish culture, tradition, and mysticism. Preteens in the Bar and Bat Mitzvah clubs gain new friends and new awareness as they prepare together for this important Jewish milestone, and the JLI teen program helps adolescents explore challenging real life issues from a Jewish perspective. For younger boys and girls, The Shul Hebrew School and Camp Gan Israel provide Jewish



learning, encouragement, and old-fashioned fun in a safe and supportive setting.

The lives of numerous individuals and families have been touched by their experiences at The Shul. For some it is a program, a service, a class or special event; for many others it is the simple joy that comes from being part of an accepting Jewish community that welcomes everyone with open arms and an open heart. Here is a sampling:

"Participating in the daily minyan at The Shul and learning to lead services

has enhanced the meaning of prayer."

-Michael Morris, West Bloomfield

"My son Logan loves learning at the Hebrew School; he is so happy to share his lessons with us when he comes home."

-Sara Marx, West Bloomfield

"When we moved to the area, it was wonderful to celebrate Shabbat and the holidays as part of The Shul family."

-Brook & Chayim Leiberman, West Bloomfield

"I was inspired by Rabbi Shemtov's wise and insightful sermon during the recent High Holiday services."

-Shari Kaufman, Orchard Lake

"The High Holiday Family Experience gave our family the opportunity to celebrate in a warm and non-judgmental atmosphere; we all learned so much!"

-Lisa LaBelle, West Bloomfield

"There is a special spirit at The Shul on





Shabbat and Yom Tov.”

-Dan Weiner, West Bloomfield

“Grandparents Day in the Sukkah with the Hebrew School gave me the chance to share special time with the grandchildren.”

-Eleanor Jackier, West Bloomfield



“Thanks to the Sukkah-Mobile – it brought people together for a holiday celebration and a mitzvah in a unique and special way. We had so much fun, and so did the dozen kids that came over to partake!”

-Robyn Hammer, West Bloomfield

“Thank you very much for the Chanukat Ha’Bayit with your lovely children and their fellow students and friends from the Yeshiva. They helped us to do the important tradition of blessing our new home and affixing Kosher mezuzahs. Because of The Shul I feel more connected to Israel and my religion.....”

-Iris, Phil, and Ella Dines, West Bloomfield

“Fabulous! The Bar Mitzvah Discovery class is a great opportunity for all the boys! Thank you!”

“It is a blessing to know that not only is your son in the hands of truly kind and loving mentors, but that he will learn the true meaning of this rite of passage.”

-Charlene & Jack Wolfe, West Bloomfield

“I appreciate the connection to Judaism that The Shul is providing to my daughter, Shoshana. The Hebrew School teachers are not teaching the holidays out of a textbook – they are celebrating and experiencing what

they know. At The Shul, they live the life they teach!”

-Danielle Sprecher, Macomb Township

“I love the adult education program. Wednesday night classes with Rabbi Dov are amazing. The other JLI classes and guest speakers make my life more meaningful, purposeful, and peaceful. I am very grateful for the acceptance and the possibility of learning no matter who you are, and where you are on your spiritual path.”

-Rita Yevzelman, West Bloomfield





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# The Fountain of Youth

BY BLUMA MARCUS,  
EDITOR OF SOULWISE MAGAZINE

**T**ODAY IS HELEN FOX'S 92nd birthday. In honor of this momentous occasion we have decided to bake challah together; to knead the dough, let it rise and say the blessing together.

Something Jewish women have been doing for thousands of years.

As we are waiting for the dough to rise Helen offers to make me a cup of coffee. I'm expecting coffee like most grandmothers make. You know, made from instant coffee that has been sitting in the pantry for a few years. But not so for Helen. She shows me her high tech percolator and proceeds to brew me a fresh cup. I'm amazed. I can only hope that when I am ninety two I will be able to do the same. To be able to measure and pour and carry the piping hot mugs to the table.

We sit down and start what has been one of the most enlightening conversations I have ever had.

I am wondering what the secret to her longevity is. Not just that she is ninety two. But that she is still living by herself in her beautiful home on the beach. That she makes such wonderful coffee. That she knows and remembers not just the names of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. But also the names of all my children. And their ages. And the schools they go to. So I ask her. What is the secret to her fountain of youth?

I am expecting to hear all kinds of answers. Of the special diets she kept. Of the specific hours she's slept. Of all the things us regular people indulge in that



supposedly shortens our lifespans.

And I'm ready to give up all of my bad habits just so I can be like her.

Her answer: Be positive. Give Charity.

And I think, how right she is. A special diet won't get us past hardship. And all the sleep in the world won't give us meaning. But seeing the beauty and good in what each of us has been blessed with can push us past the inevitable bumps that come our way. And when the focus of our lives is on others instead of ourselves, those self-serving and destructive behaviors cannot take hold.

Who knew that the elusive fountain of youth was hiding inside each one of us?



ABOUT: BLUMA MARCUS IS THE CO-FOUNDER OF THE LOS ALAMITOS HEBREW HIGH AND DIRECTS THE CHABAD CENTER IN CYPRESS/LOS ALAMITOS CALIFORNIA.

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# A Ton of Light

BY DR. ARNIE GOTFRYD PH.D.



Of all the special dates on the Jewish calendar, there's only one that celebrates light and, of course, that's Chanukah. Not that we are short on themes for this holiday: There's the miraculous military victory compared to which the Six-Day-War was banal. There's the absolute commitment and epic heroism of the Maccabees that makes the raid at Entebbe look routine. There was even the archetypal culture clash between Athens and Jerusalem that has reverberated throughout Jewish history down to this very day.

**“The Hellenists fought against the idea of mitzvah, bringing heaven down to earth, manifesting G-dliness in the physical world. The remedy was to go flat out the other way.”**

But the main observance of Chanukah wasn't hooked on any of that. It's all about light.

The lights of Chanukah commemorate the miracle of oil, and the details are instructive too. The eight days reflect unity, infinity and the supernatural. Think seven and you will see

why. The number seven characterizes nature. For instance, in space we have six directions (left, right, back, front, up and down) around any central point. In time too, there are seven days of the weekly cycle. In music, the seven notes of the scale.

Eight indicates unity in music, for example, by completing the scale then returning to the same note but at a higher level. The same applies to time. After a seven day cycle we're back to the same day we started with.

Eight expresses infinity by showing we don't stop at one series but cycle over and over again. Eight starts the new cycle of weeks, of octaves, of oscillations. And by

virtue of the simple fact that eight is more than seven (nature), it implies the miraculous, the supernatural.

We could have marked those eight days with eight jugs of oil, eight latkas or eight psalms for that matter. Why specifically lights?

Of course it's because the oil was used for lighting the menorah, but still we can learn some lessons from light itself.

Our sages remark that although the Chanukah lights are only a rabbinic mitzvah, its date, the 25th of Kislev, is alluded by the fact that the 25th word of the Torah is “Or” – light. The Hebrew word “Or” too has its inner meaning. It's numerical value is 207, which spells “Raz,” or “secret.” Not only does light reveal whatever is secreted away in the darkness, but light itself has its mysterious aspects, as any physicist will tell you.

For example, no one would doubt that light is physical, yet it is very elusive. Try holding it in your hands or weighing it on a scale. Of course we can't smell it, taste it or hear it, but the funny thing is, it's hard to even see it. Light reveals what is there but doesn't reveal itself. When we enter a lit room are we looking at light or at a room lit up? Even if I trace it to its source, is it light that I see, or a light bulb, or the sun?

Light is like the divine energy that fills the world—it's apparent but not visible. Or like the light of the soul – “ki ner Hashem nishmas adam” – the soul of man is the candle of Hashem. I, for one, have never seen a soul. But

“Every person has both a body and a soul. It is like a bird and its wings. Imagine if a bird was unaware that its wings enabled it to fly... they would only add an extra burden of weight. But once it flaps its wings, it lifts itself skyward. We all have wings—our soul—that can lift us as high as we need go. All we have to do is learn to use them.”

The Rebbe (from *Towards a Meaningful Life* by Simon Jacobson)

like anyone else, I can tell the difference between a body that has one and one that doesn't.

And this brings us to another dimension of Chanukah – the battle against Hellenism was a battle for the soul, including the soul of man – the neshama; the soul of the universe – G-d; and the soul of our activities – mitzvah - “ki ner mitzvah v'Torah or” – a mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light.

The Hellenists fought against the idea of mitzvah, bringing heaven down to earth, manifesting G-dliness in the physical world. The remedy was to go flat out the other way, to protect

and defend exactly this, the holiness of the deed, of the mitzvah, and that's why we celebrate with a mitzvah candle. It's the victory of light over darkness.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe refers to the deeds of Moshiach as his light. His presence in the world, on the other hand, is comparable to air – it's everywhere although you can't see it. Breathing the air of Moshiach is wonderful, inspiring in every sense of the word, but without his light, it's not good enough.

One of his principal deeds will be the Chanukas HaBayis, rededication of the Temple in

Jerusalem, and when that happens we will see him playing the harp of eight strings in a place above space, a time out of time, in the radiance of a divine presence that will shine forever.

What a happy Chanukah that will be.

ABOUT: DR. ARNIE GOTFRYD, PH.D. IS AN OBSERVANT JEW AND AN ACCOMPLISHED ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST. HIS INFORMATIVE AND INSPIRING PRESENTATIONS ARE PEPPERED WITH PERSONAL ANECDOTES, NEW DISCOVERIES, AND FRESH INSIGHTS INTO OLD-TIME RELIGION.

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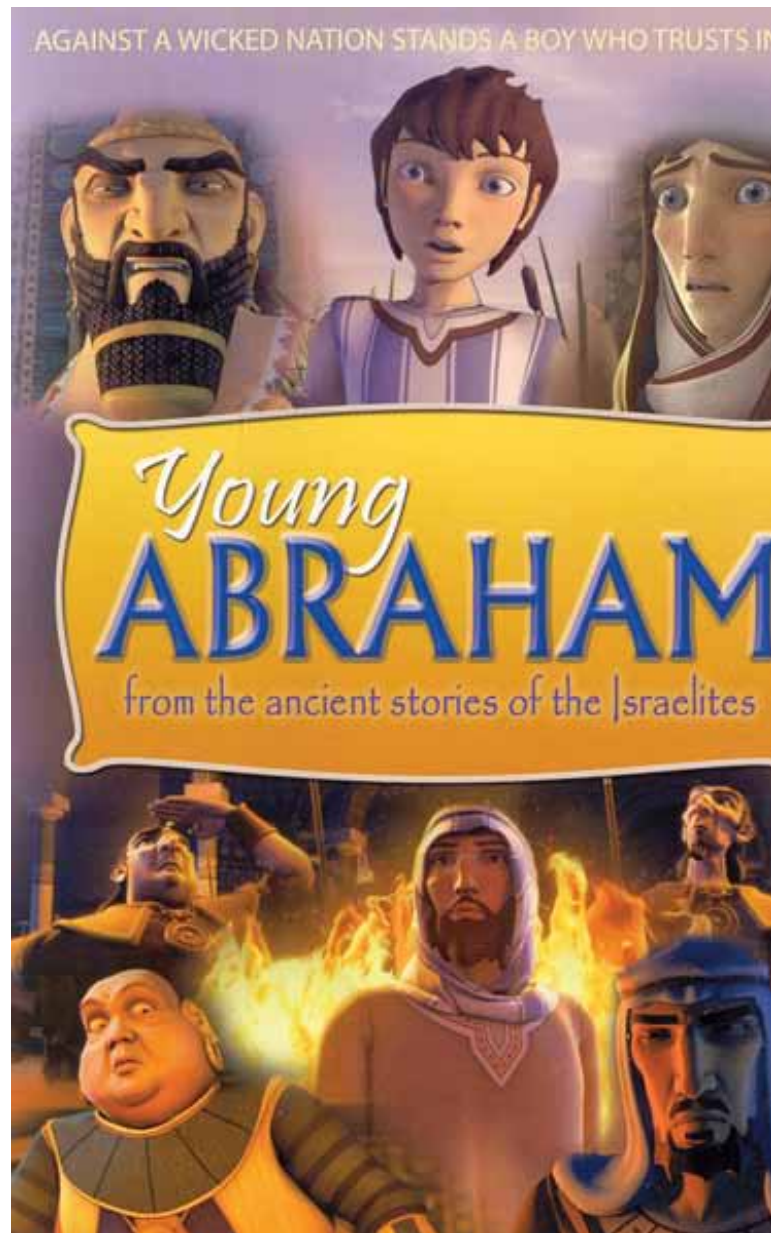
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## ANIMATION OF BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS

# Young Abraham

REVIEWED BY MENDY RIMLER

**T**HE LAST SCENE IN YOUNG ABRAHAM IS A SHOWDOWN BETWEEN NIMROD, KING OF UR KASDIM, AND BIBLICAL ABRAHAM, ENDING AS ABRAHAM EMERGES FROM A FURNACE BEFORE A NATION OF CONVERTED IDOLATERS AND A REPENTANT KING NIMROD.

That is the climax and message of the CGI (computer generated imagery) animated motion picture, a vivid and compelling retelling of the biblical and Midrashic story of Abraham's discovery of G-d. At last, entertainment with

Jewish and visual depth for young audiences. Pre-released to a hugely enthusiastic response, Young Abraham lays out an authentic narrative in a brilliantly animated world and redefines the future of Jewish films.

To research and write the script, the producers of the \$1.8 million project Saadyah El Haddad and Eliyhau Cohen approached two Montreal-based Chabad rabbis, Yisroel Bernath and Zvi Herschovich.

"The goal was to bridge traditional Judaism and Hollywood," says Rabbi Bernath, Director

of Chabad NDG and Loyola Campus. After an exhaustive study of numerous Midrashic sources and commentaries, the pair submitted the first draft in March of 2006, but they were "involved throughout the following years to monitor the project to ensure that the film stayed true to the text."

Set in ancient Mesopotamia, the film opens with King Nimrod's demand of his general Terach to hand over his newborn son, Abraham, who had been marked by Nimrod's stargazer a rebel of the kingdom. As young Abraham grows up on the run from Nimrod's men, he ruminates on the idolatrous ways of the polytheistic culture of his time and eventually arrives at his own recognition of a one and only G-d. During Abraham's brief stint in his father's idol shop and throughout the film, the comically





broad dialogue provides a healthy dose of laughter while conveying real Jewish values.

The dazzling visuals work in tandem with the Midrash and various commentaries to enhance and bring the story to life. According to Ibn Ezra, an eleventh century commentator, Abraham traveled to Noah and studied Torah under his wing. Then, after years of preparation and study, Noah urged Abraham to return to Ur Kasdim and put an end to the idol worship.

“Many people have called us just to ask if that really happened; people don’t know a lot of these details,” says Bernath.

In Atlanta, GA, Rabbi Eliyahu Shusterman held a screening of Young Abraham for an audience of thirty children who attend the Chabad day camp. Jennifer Slifkin brought her five children and watched the film together with them.

In a movie-saturated society, “this film competes for kids’ attention,” says Slifkin, an attorney. “The animation was top notch and definitely comparable with anything else out there.”

In an age where form is always a factor, Young Abraham has Pixar appeal while still remaining historically accurate and retaining the true meaning of the story of Abraham’s triumph of faith and tradition. The possibility for making this an outstanding educational experience, says Rabbi Hershovich, is what inspired them to work on this film.

“Children learn better when they see the story,” he explains. He hopes that the film, which will be released in time for the new school year, will open the eyes of children and potential producers alike.

“This film sets a new bar for producers who can teach more people by getting the information out there in a film, while keeping their feet on the ground and sticking to the sources.”

**In an age where form is always a factor, Young Abraham has Pixar appeal while still remaining historically accurate and retaining the true meaning of the story of Abraham’s triumph of faith and tradition.**

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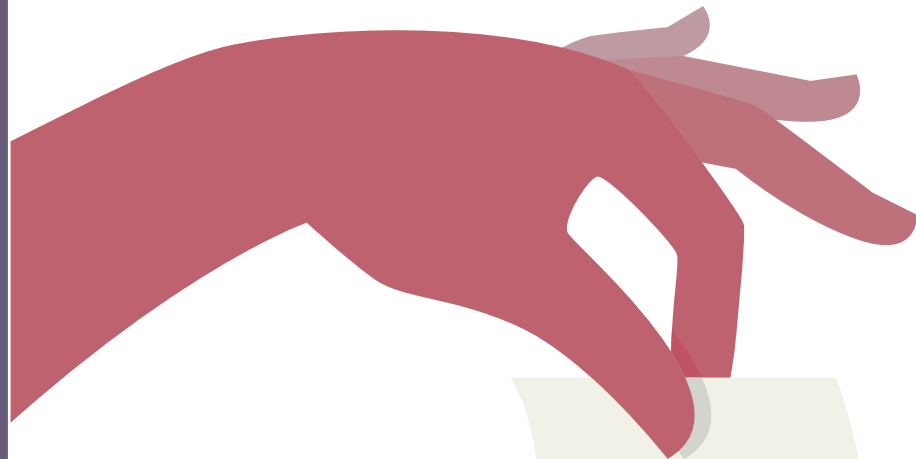
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## Traditional Potato Latkas

5 large potatoes, peeled  
1 large onion  
3 eggs  
1/3 cup flour  
1 tsp. Salt  
1/4 tsp. pepper  
3/4 cup oil for frying  
Use: 10-inch skillet  
Yields: 4 to 6 servings

Grate potatoes and onion on the fine side of a grater, or in a food processor; or put in a blender with a little water.

Strain grated potatoes and onion through a colander, pressing out excess water. Add eggs, flour, and seasoning. Mix well.

Heat 1/2 cup oil in skillet. Lower

flame and place 1 large tablespoon batter at a time into hot sizzling oil and fry on one side for approximately 5 minutes until golden brown. Turn over and fry on other side 2 to 3 minutes.

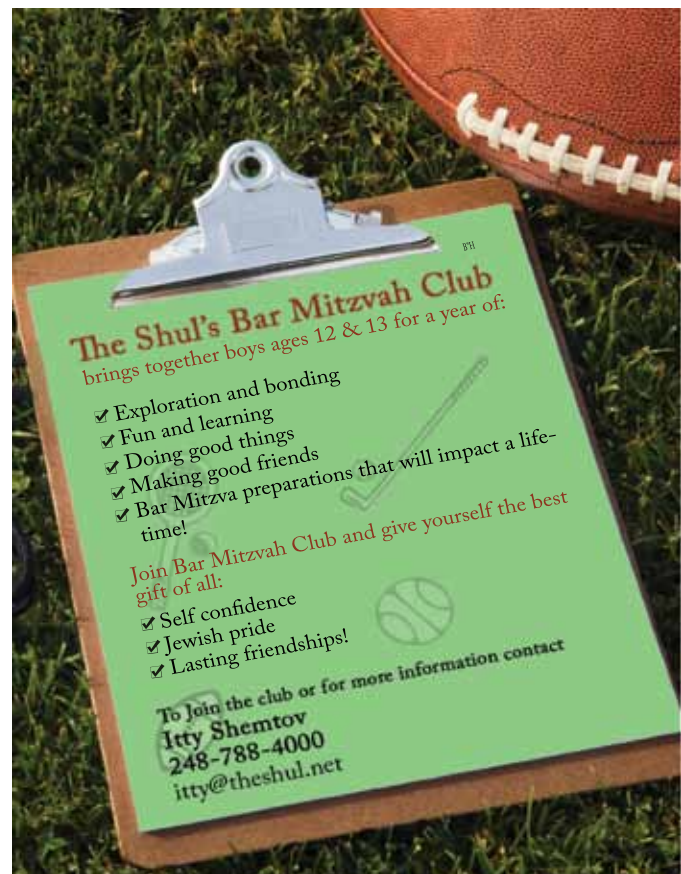
Remove from pan and place on paper towels to drain excess oil. Continue with remaining batter until used up, adding more oil when necessary. Serve with applesauce on the side.

Variation: Zucchini or Carrot Latkas: Substitute 5 medium zucchini or 5 medium carrots for potatoes..

## Classic Suf-gany'ot

2 packages yeast  
1/3 cup sugar  
3/4 cup water  
1/4 cup orange juice  
1/3 cup coconut oil or margarine  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
4 or 5 cups. flour  
3 egg yolks  
Jelly of your choice for filling  
Powdered Sugar

Mix water, sugar, juice, and yeast. Let stand 10 minutes. Melt coconut oil or margarine and add to yeast mixture. Beat in eggs and salt. Add flour, mixing and kneading by hand to form a soft dough. Let rise 1-1/2 hours. Roll dough 1/4 inch thick and cut circles (approximately 2 inches). Let circles rise 1/2 hour. Deep fry at 400° F about 3 minutes, turning once. Pipe in jelly and roll in powdered sugar.







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