



PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Vayeishev-Chanukah ✍️ Rabbi Moshe Rokach

A Rose Among Thorns

In מעוז צור, the stanza dedicated to the נס חנוכה begins by mentioning some examples of the wickedness perpetrated by the Greeks:

”יוונים נקבצו עלי אזי בימי חשמנים ופרצו חומות מגדלי וטמאו כל השמנים”

What breaches is the verse, “and they breached the walls of my tower” referring to and what significance do they have in the נס of חנוכה?

Rav Mattisyahu Solomon שליט”א (מתנת חיים-מועדים, פז) explains based on the משנה in (פ”ב מ”ג) which states:

”לפנים ממנו סורג, גבוה עשרה טפחים, ושלוש עשרה פרצות היו שם שפרצום מלכי יון”

“*Within [the Temple Mount] was the soreg (lattice-work fence), ten handbreadths tall (approximately three feet). The soreg was breached in thirteen places by the kings of Greece.*”

Clearly, breaching the סורג was not an attempt at destroying the בית המקדש. After all, these breaches hardly compromised the physical structure of the בית המקדש. Rather, breaching the סורג was indicative of the יוונים' intention of breaking down the barrier between ישראל and the Greeks. As the Tosfos Yom Tov explains, the סורג served as a divider, restricting non-Jews who came to be מתפלל in the בית המקדש from further access. By breaching it, the Greeks demonstrated that they intended to penetrate this barrier and wished to worship alongside the Jews in the בית המקדש. In this way, they hoped to influence, rather than annihilate the Jews and eventually destroy the spiritual fabric of ישראל.

In light of this, another point can be clarified. מעוז צור continues with a brief description of the נס:

”ומותר קנקנים נעשה נס לשושנים”

Why is ישראל כלל referred to here with the unusual name “שושנים”?

The name “שושנים” Rav Solomon explains, is derived from a

פסוק in Shir Hashirim that compares כלל ישראל to a “rose among thorns”:

”כשושנה בין החוחים כן רעיתי בין הבנות”

Rashi explains that the העולם attempt to lure כלל ישראל to follow them in serving זרה עבודה, as the thorns of a rosebush threaten to pierce the rose. Yet כלל ישראל remains steadfast in their אמונה and retain their beauty, like the rose that is left unscathed among the thorns.

The יוונים attempted to break down the בין ישראל but כלל ישראל was מוסר נפש to maintain their special connection to הקב”ה. “נעשה נס לשושנים” means that it was the זכות of כלל ישראל dedicating themselves to maintaining their uniqueness and beauty that brought about the ניסים בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

The משנה in מועדים mentioned above continues:

”חזרו וגדרום וגזרו כנגדם שלש עשרה השתחויות”
“*The breaches were subsequently mended and thirteen prostrations were instituted [while passing these areas in gratitude to Hashem for overthrowing the wicked rule of Greece].*”

Special השתחויות - prostrations were instituted in the בית המקדש in recognition of the downfall of יון. So too, for all generations, חנוכה - “בני בינה ימי שמונה קבעו שיר ורננים” was designated as a time of הלל והודאה to recognize that the הקב”ה enabled us to overcome the attempts of the יוונים to break down the בין ישראל and retain our special connection to Him.

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HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

When to Light the Menorah

Rabbi Shlomo Francis

The Gemara (Shabbos 21b) states that the time to perform the mitzvah of ner Chanukah begins "meshetishkeh hachama" - from the time that the sun sets. The Tur (672) and other rishonim reason, that at sunset (the moment the sun dips below the horizon), there is still too much sunlight for a flame to be noticeable. They therefore conclude, that "meshetishkeh hachama" must mean "the end of sunset". This refers to the moment when the light of the sun is no longer visible. At that time, it is also dark enough for one to see three medium size stars in the sky. Therefore, this time is also called "tseis hakochavim" - the appearance of the stars. However, the Rambam and other rishonim, understand, that "meshetishkeh hachama" is referring to the actual time of sunset. The minhag in Eretz Yisroel, established by the students of the Vilna Gaon, is to follow the view of the Rambam. Most communities outside of Eretz Yisroel, follow the view of the Tur and light at tseis hakochavim.

The Gemara (ibid) continues, that the mitzvah of ner Chanukah extends "ad shetichleh regel min hashuk" - until the time that people are no longer frequenting the streets. The Rambam is of the opinion that one must light at the moment of shkia. However, if one did not light at that proper time, he may do so until the time of "ad shetichleh." Thus, according to the view of the Rambam, if one does not light at the moment of shkia, he has not performed the mitzvah in the preferred fashion. According to other Rishonim, however, it is not an absolute requirement to light at the first possible moment, although it certainly is preferred. The Shulchan Aruch also seems to imply that one should light at the first possible moment. However, the sefer, Ma'amer Mordechai explains, that the Shulchan Aruch is quoting the Rambam to suggest that one follow his view if possible, especially because there is concept of "zirizim makdimim l'mitzvos," all mitzvos should be performed at the first available opportunity. However, explains the Ma'amer Mordechai, he is not negating the opinion of other rishonim that do not speak so strongly about lighting after the zman.

THE PREFERRED TIME TO LIGHT

The Mishna Berura (672:1) suggests that one should light 15 minutes before tseis hakochavim (25 to 35 minutes after shkia). He reasons, that even according to the rishonim who are of the opinion that tseis hakochavim is the ideal time to light, lighting earlier is not a problem, as long as one lights when it is dark and the flames are noticeable (see Biur Halcha ibid). He determines that at a half hour before tseis hakochavim it is dark enough for one to light according to all opinions. He also cites many rishonim who are of the opinion that the correct time to light is fifteen minutes before tseis hakochavim. According to these rishonim, waiting until tseis hakochavim is not ideal, as it is preferable to light at the earliest possible moment.

In Lakewood Yeshiva, the custom is to light 23 minutes after shkia. This is reportedly based on the opinion of R' Aharon Kotler. For a detailed explanation of this opinion, see sefer Moadei Hashana, addendum B.

Hagaon R' Moshe Feinstein (Igr"M 4:101) suggests that one light 10 minutes after shkia. R' Moshe assumed tseis hakochavim is most likely 40 minutes after shkia. Therefore, he suggests that one light 10 minutes after shkia as this would be acceptable, even according to the opinion that tseis hakochavim is the ideal time to light. Hagaon R' Dovid Feinstein (quoted in Shu't Vidibarta Bam) relates that in practice his father would instruct people to follow the long standing custom of lighting at tseis hakochavim (40-50 minutes after shkia).

LIGHTING LATE

The Gemara (Shabbos 21b) states that one may light "ad shetichleh regel min hashuk" - until the time when people are no longer frequenting the streets. Lighting after this time would not be fulfilling persumei nisa, as people are no longer frequenting the streets, and is (according to some opinions) invalid. During the times of the Gemara, "ad shetichleh" was a half hour after the time of

hadlaka (Rambam ibid). The Rama (672:2) suggests that in his days, when people would light inside their houses one was not required to adhere to the time of "ad shetichleh". Others, including the Chida (Sefer Yosef Omets 673) argue, that when Chazal established the correct time to light, they established "ad shetichle" as the standard time for all situations. Therefore, even though we light indoors and the reason behind the enactment may not apply, we are not allowed to revise the words of Chazal. The Rama himself recommends that one adhere to the times established by Chazal even if one lights indoors.

Hagaon R' Dovid Feinstein, quoted in Shu't Vidibarta Bam (178) points out, that the Rama was referring to the practice in his days, when people lit inside their houses with almost no exposure to the rishus harabim (public thoroughfare). Thus, the primary persumei nisa was fulfilled through the members of one's own household. This being the case, it was not necessary to conform with the guidelines which Chazal instituted for those lighting near the street. Nowadays, the custom is to light near a window. Accordingly, the persumei nisa is primarily for those who frequent the streets. Therefore, one should certainly make every effort to conform with the guidelines prescribed by Chazal and light within the half hour after tseis hakochavim.

One who is unable to light during the first half hour after tseis hakochavim should make every effort to light at a time when people are still frequenting the streets. The sefer, Moadim Vizmanim suggests that in Eretz Yisroel, where most stores close at seven o'clock, "ad shetichleh" would be around that time. Hagaon R' Dovid Feinstein is of the opinion, that in America, in many large cities, "ad shetichleh" may occur as late as eight or nine o'clock (Shu't Vidibarta Bam 182). The time varies, however, from city to city and even from street to street in one city. The sefer, Mikadesh Yisroel states, that "ad shetichleh" refers to when the streets are no longer populated. The fact that occasional individuals may still be seen on the streets does not extend the zman.

After "ad shetichleh," pirsumei nisa is fulfilled by displaying the menorah to the members of one's household. If there is no one in the house who will see the flames burning, the brochos may not be recited. Therefore, the Mishna Berura writes (673:11), that if one is lighting after all the members of his family are asleep, he should wake someone up in order to perform the mitzvah with a brocha.

LIGHTING EARLY

The Shulchan Aruch writes, "One must light at the 'end of shkia' - no earlier, and no later. There are those who say that if one will not be available to light at the proper time he may light as early as plag hamincha (an hour and fifteen minutes before tseis hakochavim), as long as the flames will burn 'ad shetichleh'." The Mishna Berura quotes the sefer, Birchei Yosef, that the halacha follows the latter opinion, and one may, therefore, light after "plag." At this time, he may even recite a brocha. However, since other poskim are of the opinion that a brocha may not be recited, one should make every effort to light at the proper time (Chasam Sofer Shabbos 22b and Shu't Shevet Halevi 3:81). If one cannot possibly light at the proper time, he preferably light after "ad shetichleh" as opposed to before "plag" (R' Shmuel Felder in Shiurei Halacha).

HOW LONG MUST THE CANDLES BURN?

The candles must burn until half an hour after the prescribed time for hadlaka. Even those who light before tseis hakochavim must contend with the opinion of the Tur. Therefore, their candles must burn for a half an hour after tseis hakochavim as well. Hagaon R' Moshe Feinstein writes in Igr"M (101:6) that it is sufficient for the candles to burn for 70 minutes after shkia. This would mean having the candles burn for 30 minutes after tseis hakochavim, based on the opinion that tseis hakochavim occurs 40 minutes after shkia.

Rabbi Francis is a full-time member of the kollel. This halacha encounter is an excerpt from the recently published sefer, Moadei Hashana, written by Rabbi Francis. To obtain a copy, contact the kollel at (773)262-9400.