

פרשת מקץ
שבת חנוכה תשפ"ה

From the Chabura (Chazarah)
By: Adam Friedmann

This observation allows us to understand the Rambam's choice. The essence of Hallel is the phrase

hodu laHashem ki tov, ki le'olam chasdo. (See *Yalkut Shimoni, Shir Ha-Shirim*, 986) In this phrase we are thanking Hashem for specific good things He's done for us and acknowledging that the limits of His kindness expand far beyond them. (See Radak to *Tehillim* 118 s.v. *Beit Aharon*) If this is the case, we understand why Chanukah's Hallel is superior to that of the *Yamim Tovim*. On the latter, there is no visceral sense of Hashem's kindness. We know they are days with special *kedusha* because the Torah indicates this. It's not a direct experience. On Chanukah, by contrast, the experience of God's kindness is direct and acute. He enabled us to defeat our enemies, regain sovereignty over the land of Israel, and capped it off with the miracle of the oil. (See *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Megilah Uchanukah* 3:1-2) Chanukah is therefore the time when our Hallel is most directly linked to the experiences that fuel its recital. This may be why the Rambam decided to place the laws of Hallel where he did.



Chanukah Sameach!

Challenge: Spot all the mistakes AI made when generating this image.

Mishnah: A Philosophy of Life

By: Dovid Campbell

Bikkurim 1:6 — Chanukah, the End of Joy

There are surprisingly few references to Chanukah in the Mishnah, and when it is mentioned, it is usually in the context of some other mitzvah. *Bikkurim* 1:6 is a good example. The mishnah tells us that while *bikkurim* may be brought until Chanukah, one may only recite the associated *mikra bikkurim* when he brings them before Sukkot. Rebbe Yehudah ben Beteira disagrees – even *mikra bikkurim* may be recited until Chanukah. Why is this period from Sukkot to Chanukah subject to debate?

Chazal derive a special requirement of *simcha* for the recitation of *mikra bikkurim*. While many fruits are still collected until Chanukah, the Chachamim hold that our joy in the yearly harvest ends with Sukkot. But Rebbe Yehudah ben Beteira believes this seasonal joy extends all the way until Chanukah. As long as we are still collecting our produce and enjoying nature's bounty, we possess the necessary feelings of joy for *mikra bikkurim* (*Melechet Shlomo*; see Bartenura for an alternative explanation).

In the context of this mishnah, Chanukah is simply a deadline, a way to mark the changing seasons. But this teaching also imbues Chanukah with a special context that is easily missed in modern times. Most of us are not working the fields, and we do not experience the unique joy that a successful harvest brings. But imagine plowing the earth, seeding it, tending it carefully for weeks, and finally seeing the first blooms of spring, followed by the healthy growth of fresh fruits. For weeks, everything is bursting with life. But then the days get noticeably shorter, the air begins to cool, and the explosion of new life ceases. You are alone with whatever you managed to gather, and a long winter awaits.

The time for joy has come to an end, but it is a particular type of joy that you are leaving behind – a seasonal rejoicing that is bound to the regular patterns of nature. Chanukah marks our transition to a different type of joy – a spiritual rejoicing that is bound not to nature, but to nature's transcendence. Chanukah is the first holiday of the year that is grounded entirely in a miracle.

Writer and philosopher Albert Camus once observed, “In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there's something stronger – something better, pushing right back.”

Camus' sentiment is inspiring and worth remembering, but it also seems to miss the point. Camus felt *confronted* by his world and sought the internal strength to oppose it. He found nothing encouraging or redeeming about life's harsh winters. On Chanukah, we take an alternative approach. In the midst of winter, in the very absence of the abundance we once knew, we embrace the joyful possibility of the miraculous.

Sforno on the Parsha

By: Nochum Spiegel

Pattern Recognition

The Sforno (introduction to commentary) describes how in his generation the Torah was under attack. The commandments as well as narrative portions were viewed by its critics as lacking wisdom, structure, and significance. Are the Torah's "stories" and their accompanying details the relics of a historical record or does a pertinent message emanate from its words?

Chazal (*Tanchuma Lech Lecha*, 9) through their analysis of patterns in the Torah reveal a principle: "all that occurred to Avraham occurs to his children". The actions performed both by and to our Avot carry with them a prophetic imprint (for explanation of the mechanics at work see Sforno, Introduction; Ramban, *Bereishit* 12:6). Hashem orchestrates past and future events in a guided parallel. This historical mirroring does not solely occur within the *parshiot* of the Torah such as the famine-induced trips to Egypt of Avraham and the shevatim, followed by the subsequent departures laden with wealth. It extends to the experiences of the readers of the Torah living thousands of years later.

Sforno explains (introduction, last section) that the happenings of Bnei Yisrael during the four hundred and eighty years from leaving Egypt till the building of the first Beit Hamikdash, this formative period of national identity, corresponds to the life of Avraham from when he left Ur Kasdim and arrived in Eretz Yisrael. Just as Avraham had built four altars (*Bereishit* 12:7, 12:8, 13:18, 22:9) representing places of Divine service, his descendants worshipped Hashem, building a *mizbeach* in the *Mishkan* in four locations (Midbar, Shilo, Nov, Givon). The era of the first *Beit Hamikdash* and its single *mizbeach* aligns with the life of Yitzchak who is recorded as building only one (ibid. 26:25). The second *Beit Hamikdash*, exile, and future redemption when the third Temple will be built follows the pattern of Yaakov. He built two altars (ibid. 33:20, 35:7) during a life where he endured loss, pain, and grief. The reunification with Yosef represented a final relief after despair. Bnei Yisrael will once again achieve completion after a long and bitter *golut*.

Upon being informed of Yosef's dream interpretation skills, "Paroh sent and called for Yosef, and they rushed him from the pit" (41:14). Why emphasize that he was rushed out, why not simply state that he was removed? Sforno explains that the Torah is stressing the manner of Hashem's deliverance. It occurs instantaneously. No matter how bleak or how long the situation has persisted, redemption can materialize in a moment. After hundreds of years of slavery, the Jews were rushed out of Egypt before their dough could even rise. This will transpire once more in the future when "the Master (Mashiach), whom you seek, **will suddenly** come to His temple" (Malachi 3:1).

Study of the patterns in the Torah and an awareness of their fulfillment throughout our history strengthens our *emunah* and resolve in confronting the challenges we experience in our *golut*.