

For 281 - sign 2218 - Dec. 6, 1958

Variations in the Hanukkah Theme

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I - Tonight, immediately after ~~out~~ the Sabbath is over, we shall be confronted with the observance of one of two precious mitzvot: The kindling of the H. candles, for H. begins tonite; and the Hamdallah which marks the end of Sabbath. ~~And the question~~ which shall be performed first & in which engaged the attention of our forefathers, illustrious ^{latter-day} Sages, and which the solution most Jews have accepted is one which, implicitly & indirectly, expresses a great idea of Jewish ethics & moral philosophy.

II - The "sh" (code J. law) [שְׁמַרְנִיק] and ("N), chief commentary on it, record with approval the custom of reciting Hamdallah first, & only afterwards kindling the ~~sign~~ ^{sh} first, & why then reciting the Hamdallah. Other authorities, such as the author of *zohar*, and many others, emphatically disagree. They insist that you ought to recite the *sh* first, & why ~~an~~ afterwards ~~too~~ light the H. candles.

III - While the controversy involves a large number of proofs & counter-proofs, of halakhic dialectic, which is too involved to present completely from the pulpit, it will nevertheless worthwhile to examine the basic ideas involved in this controversy.

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IV The תְּלִין ("לֵין"), & all those who wait upon the
precedence of H-candles over רַבָּד, largely base their
verdict upon the principle (ס) 'N10>ד - "the
publicizing of the miracle". The H-candles, after all,
are reminders of the miracles God performed for our
ancestors בְּצִילּוֹמָר פָּנָן פְּנַיְךְ - the exodus from Egypt & days
of victory of the sanctified few over the abominable many
& terror. Basic to the אַלְפָן of הַיּוֹם is this concept:
(ס) 'N10>ד - to make the Divine miracle known
amongst all men. That is why we are to place the
H-candles in a conspicuous place - windows,
doorway, etc. Therefore, since (ס) 'N10>ד is basic
to the whole festival of H., it requires us to proclaim
the miracle of H. as soon as the holiday begins -
before any other activity, sacred or profane, is
undertaken. Before eating or drinking, or even בְּלָזֶבֶת,
we are to light H-candles, by this act of performing this
רַבָּד before any other, I adduce (ס) 'N10>ד, I let everyone
know that the greatness of the miracle, one which causes
us to hurry & rush to perform the mitzvah.

V The רַבָּד + other days, however, require שְׁמִינִית
before (ה) because they were use of a different
& they maintain, more fundamental principles, and
that is the talmudic rule: בְּשִׁירָה שְׁמִינִית וְתִלְיָה
- if I have before me two אַלְפָן to perform; one
is a frequent mitzvah, & it is observed regularly & periodically
at frequent intervals; so then, it is רַבָּד - constant; & the

On Menorah, it is an irregular sh'mar which is performed infrequently, at very rare times. From the 18th annual, regular, more frequent sh'mar comes first.

zmanim, mitzvot. Here, since sh'mar is zman, it is observed very rarely each yr., & zman is zman for it is observed only very early in the year. sh'mar takes priority over zman.

(VI) Reduced to its essentials, then, this halakhic controversy is based upon a choice of two principles:

(co) NIDDAH - The demutigation & publicization)
The unusual, the supernatural; or zman,
The precedence of the regular, instant, usual,
the well-known.

(VII) It is remarkable that in our current practice we reflect both contradictory opinions. Faced with these two opposing decisions, the great majority of observant Jews have resolved the two views by distinguishing between the Synagogues & the Home. In the Synagogue we follow the custom of sh'mar & l'isah, and we light the sh'mar first, thus emphasizing the principle of NIDDAH; and at home we usually follow the verdict of sh'mar, l'isah & zman first, & thus giving greater weight to the rule of zman, mitzvot - that the usual & the regular & the minhagim is more important & comes first.

VIII. - It is amazing how in deciding between two technical opinions, the Jewish masses of men, women, & children have indirectly expressed a whole view of life, a substantial philosophy of Judaism in its public + private aspects. For the concepts of (10) N/10/2 + 22/12/11/1 are two fundamental approaches to life - the need for 210/2, for publicizing, for demonstration of the joy, funereal & dramatic + revelation; & on the other hand the transcendent, importance of 212 - of the every dayish, prosaic, regular & bland routine of the religious life. What our people did by its revaluation of these two opposing views is to say that each was valid, each we has its importance, but each in its own place - in the synagogue, in the public eye, in the open arena of life. Then we kindle H.-lights before 212, then we recognize the value of (10) N/10/2, of symbolizing the dramatic, funereal, the outstanding, the miraculous. But at home, (10) 1/2, in the privacy of one's heart & family, then - which (10) N/10/2 is important, the value of 212 is far more imp. Then we must first be sure that our daily lives, in both ritual & ethics, in 11 S/12/1/12 & 22/12/1/12, is regulated by the divine word from the wisdom of God. Then we need not & ought not play up the unusual & the miraculous; that can wait to late. First, we must be a good Jew in the daily, ordinary - & then - holier - sans.

IX. There is no doubt that (10) N/O 2 has an honored place in life, & in the public ~~&~~ arena of life it has priority. No one doubts the value of the dramatic, the strikingly esthetic, the unusual & the miraculous. In order to influence the broad masses, you must resort to the striking, the unusual. Public relations is a ^{ventrilo} technique which can be cheap & vulgar, but pressed into ^{agitated} service for True Religion, it can be noble & worthy. The [10], the great mass gathering at the end of the first year, served the purpose of drawing my adherents to Torah. The prayerfully surrounding the cutting & offering of the Omer ^{in Temple days} dramatically attracted attention to the debt man over God in the countries of Nature. A school assembly public news paper highlights not the everyday humdrum of living - including birth & its noble & grim features - but the rather 'N/O 2 (10), the sensational & odd & outstanding. We do not call mass-rallies for the observance of Yom Kippur ^{and other etc} We do do for Birds for Saving human lives from USA, for helping ^{poor people called} Israel. This (10) N/O 2 is emphasized especially in public - & that is as it should be. It serves a high educational purpose.

X. But it is a grievous error for any man to imagine that what holds true for the stage is good for the new, that techniques invented to capture the attention

If the public are performing in the quiet privacy of the home. That is decidedly not so. In the home we work = first before audience H-lights. In the home we give priority to the 1st, the regular + unostentatious over the (ex) N10s. In the home - That is when the great work of solid, ^{stolid} basic training in q-dliness must go on without flash & flourish. When q-d ^{first} gave the Torah to Israel it was in a most dramatic setting - Thunder, lightning, then universal silence + the loud boom of the first commandment & ^{for} this was to 600,000 people gathered about the smoking Mt Sinai.

But while the drama of 1st is appropriate to a large public, the slow & hard labor of 10s is not meant to go on necessarily & without fanfare in the private life of each individual. It was because Jews forgot this that the Tablets were broken.

~~XII~~ - The prophet Elijah never had to go up a second time - but this time alone, ^{for his trial} without an audience & without the massive sound + light effects. It was the labor of 1st, not the flourish of 10s. Or may Jews thus learned how Torah not be observed in their omnipotence & that is why these Tablets were not destroyed.

~~XII~~ - The prophet Elijah too had to learn this lesson. Remember his challenge to the priests of Baal atop Mt. Carmel? What powerful drama with the brave, wanted prophet of q-d crying out, the deaf to take in hundreds of idolatrous priests, daunting them

to worship Baal to bring fire down & consume the
unfeudal flesh. How thrillingly miraculous the
prayer of Elijah as the multitudes gaze, the sudden
bolt of fire out of the Heaven, the coming of the
Sanctie, the prostration of the masses as they
call out g. d. (All hail) g. d. q-d performed the miracle
before all the people because it was an educational
act. It ~~was~~ diverted them from Baal-worship
brought them to Torah. (1 Kings below, 19:12, in public).

But do you recall what happens immediately
afterwards to Elijah? The days that follow in
the Second book of Kings? He flees from King + Syria
& heads out in the desert - alone, solitary, no other person
in sight - Exodus 3:11 - I am alone here, he complains
to q-d. Elijah had been overly impressed by the
(1 Kings), the miracles, the signs, the
great crowds & the mass ~~large~~ demonstrations. He
could ~~not~~ ^{no longer} tolerate the ^{The task prophecy without crisis-to-crisis living,} prophet. The daily, regular
grueling task of serving q-d alone, in privacy. That
is why q-d prohibits the prophet from whole-purana
of dramatic, mighty natural phenomena - the Volcanoes,
the Earthquakes & the Flood. But Exodus 19:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.
Not in these unusual can q-d always be found.
Where then? - Exodus 20:11 ... in the steady,
quiet, simple, regular labor of character building &
what ~~spirit~~ of living honorably & honestly, & according
the desire will q-d in private daily life. Exodus 20:12

When the audience has gone home & the lights are dimmed, when the noise has died out, & all that can be heard is the ~~spirit~~^{+ silence reigns} / of our heart beat & the pulse of his conscience — That is when we leave (10:10) & dedicate ourselves to the spirit, the regular & unpretentious. That is when we give precedence to ~~spirit~~, to just distinguishing good from evil, sacred from profane, noble from vulgar, so that every year & every month & every day, every minute be consecrated to God & His Torah.

XII

This is a rewarding thought that Hanukkah teaches us by taking second place to Hoshannah in our homes tonight. It rewards us that we ought not feel disappointed if we do not experience the kind of unusual sensations at home that we do when we attend rallies. It encourages us to continue on our modest paths of ~~spirit~~, of quietly observing God's Torah, of developing nobility of character, of bringing even a little light into the lives of our loved ones & the heart of the stranger. It rewards us that if we dedicate ourselves to the sacred pattern of the Torah's spirit, then surely the (10:10) will come later; for there is a tension in this modesty of daily Jewish life, a tension & a poetry & a dramatic quality that makes us feel not

in a momentary thunder-clap but ^{as} in a long slow ^{but beautiful} symphony as we go on, so with the accumulation of years of experience, after years of such harmonies (10:10) but we first begin to appreciate, after years of such harmonies (10:10) in serving God who has accumulated. Our atmosphere gives way to ^{as we go on} ^{the more brilliant it will be} ^{but beautiful} ^{symphony} ^{to us} to his truth.

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