



Likkutei Sichos

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The Miracles of Chanukah

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1.

ORDER CHANGE

In the prayer of “*Haneros halalu*” {which is recited after kindling the menorah}, we specify three terms:¹ “(We kindle these lights) to commemorate the **salvations, miracles, and wonders...**” At the end of *Haneros halalu*, we repeat these three terms, but in a different order: “...in order to offer thanks and praise to Your great Name for **Your miracles, for Your wonders, and for Your salvations.**”

We need to understand: Why do we change the order?

2.

ALL OF THE MIRACLES

The fact that “*Haneros halalu*” refers to (not only the “miracles,” but also) the “wonders” and “salvations” {that Hashem performed for the Jewish people} demonstrates that the *mitzvah* of lighting *Chanukah* candles commemorate not only the miracle of the **flask of oil**² [since the miracle of the flask of oil is not in the category of “salvations”];

Rather, the menorah lighting also commemorates all of the forms of salvation that Hashem brought about “in those days in this time.”³ They can be divided, in general, into {three categories that are expressed by} these three terms (as will be explained);

And these terms are in the **plural**: “salvations... miracles... wonders,” since the events of *Chanukah* include **numerous** acts of deliverance of various forms.

¹ This is the wording found in *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 676; and the Alter Rebbe's *Siddur*. Other *Siddurim* {may} contain variations.

² {When the Jews re-entered the Temple after their victory over the Greek military, they only found one jar of pure oil to use for the kindling of the *Menorah*, with only enough oil to burn for one day. Miraculously, it lasted for eight days, the time it took for them to acquire more pure oil.}

³ {From the *Neiros Halalu* liturgy.}

This resolves another (strong) difficulty regarding the commemoration of the Chanukah miracle:

Regarding the miracle of Purim, there is an **obligation** to acknowledge the salvation and deliverance from Haman the wicked, etc., **both** during the day and at night.⁴ By contrast, the {military} victory over the Greeks on Chanukah, which was also a miracle (and moreover — an open miracle: “You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, etc.”⁵ while the Purim miracle was hidden within the natural order) is only mentioned at night, in the additional paragraph of “*Ve'al Hanissim*” recited in the evening prayers, and in the Grace after Meals.

And since:

- a. the evening prayer was **optional** {originally};⁶ and,
- b. there is no obligation to break bread during (the nights of) Chanukah {and therefore no guarantee that the Grace after Meals will be recited},

there is no **categorical** obligation to mention the miraculous military victory on the **nights** of Chanukah.⁷

Based on the above {that we mention the military victory during *Haneros Halalu*, which is recited after kindling the menorah,} this {difficulty} is resolved simply: The kindling of the menorah commemorates (not only of the miracle of the flask of oil, but also) of all the miracles that occurred during the days of Chanukah.

⁴ *Megillah* 4a; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Megillah*,” ch. 1, par. 3; *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 687:1.

⁵ Formula of *Haneros Halalu* that is recited on Chanukah.

⁶ *Brachos* 27b; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teffilah*,” ch. 1, par. 6; *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” beginning of sec. 235; *Shulchan Aruch Harav*, “*Orach Chaim*,” beginning of sec. 89. {As explained in these sources, *Maariv*, the evening prayer, is nowadays obligatory for men.}

⁷ {During the day, however, we are obligated to recite Hallel which commemorates the military victory.}

As we find⁸ {throughout Jewish practice}, lighting candles is one of the ways of expressing remembrance and **praise** to Hashem.

3.

THEN AND NOW

This is also the reason for the change in order of the three terms {mentioned} in *Haneros Halalu*:

The beginning {of the prayer} speaks of the three forms of deliverance and salvation etc., “...**that you performed for our fathers in those days...**” Therefore, their order is “...the salvations, the miracles, and the wonders...,” since that was the order of events — first “salvations” then “miracles” and then “wonders.”

The end of “*Haneros Halalu*,” however, speaks of the three forms {of salvation} as they arouse within **us** the sentiment {that leads us} “to give thanks and praise to Your great Name.” In that context, they have a different order: The category of “miracles” are the first to inspire a person to give thanks and praise to Hashem; after that, the category of “wonders,” and only then, the category of “salvations.”

⁸ See *Sanhedrin* 32b, *Tosafos*, s.v. “Kol”. See *Targum Yirmiyahu*, 25:10 “**which praises** with the light of the lamp.”

4.

SALVATIONS, MIRACLES, AND WONDERS

The explanation {of the above will be understood by explaining} the distinction between “salvations,” “miracles,” and “wonders”:

When a nation wages a war against a foe whose military power (quantitatively and qualitatively)⁹ is comparable to their own, that nation (also) needs Hashem’s **salvation** in order to emerge victorious, since by nature, either side may win. **Such** a victory and salvation, however, appears as something natural, not miraculous, higher than nature, since in the natural course of events, each side has at least as much chance of victory as the other.

A **miracle** is a salvation and deliverance that is **higher**¹⁰ than nature, runs contrary to the laws of nature, as in the case of a military victory in which the victorious side is much weaker than the opposing side, making it impossible for them to win naturally. In this scenario, such a victory is a miracle; it transcends nature.

Wonders are events that inspire wonder in those that witness them. True, they are not clear miracles since they can be explained as natural phenomena, but they are events that are **separate** and **distinguished**¹¹ from the ordinary way of things. Therefore, they inspire wonder — it is a wondrous event.

[As we find regarding the redemption of the Alter Rebbe on the 19th of Kislev that the Alter Rebbe wrote:¹² “{Hashem} performed **wonders**.... in the land:” The redemption of the 19th of Kislev came about through the

⁹ See *Rashi* on *Bereishis* 14:9.

¹⁰ See *Rashi*, *Bamidbar* 21:8.

¹¹ See *Rashi*, *Shemos* 8:18. Note the saying of our Sages (*Niddah* 31a.), that regarding the category of miracles that “even the one for whom the miracle was performed does not recognise {the miracle that was performed for him},” it is said (*Tehillim* 72:18) “who does **wondrous** things alone...”

¹² In his famous letter, printed in “*Megillas Yud Tes Kislev*,” p. 22; *Igros Kodesh Admor Hazaken*, ch. 38 {in the most recent edition (2012), ch. 59}; *Sefer Hatoldos Admor Hazaken*. p. 218. (vol. 3, p. 720 in the 1986 edition.) See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 285, et al.

intervention of government officials and was accomplished through much effort, etc. At the same time, however, it was a completely exceptional outcome, a wondrous thing, “[Hashem performed} wonders....”]

5.

IN THOSE DAYS

These three categories of Divine deliverance and salvation occurred “in those days...,” during the days of Chanukah. They unfolded in order: first salvations, then miracles, and then wonders.

The victory of the *Chashmonaim*¹³ began in their city, *Modiin* (where *Matisyahu* and his sons lived). The Greeks attempted to sacrifice a pig and the *Chashmonaim* organized armed resistance and were victorious.¹⁴

This was a salvation, but not a revealed miracle or a revealed wonder, since in *Modiin*, there was not a large Greek military force.

Afterward, the Jews fought a war against a formidable Greek military — {an force that was} much more numerous than the Jewish army — that was deployed¹⁵ by *Antiochus* {the Syrian-Greek Emperor}. A revealed miracle transpired, {an event that} transcended nature: “You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few,” the Jews were victorious.

After the winning the war, the *Chashmanaim* entered the *Beis Hamikdash*, and discovered that there was no pure oil with which to kindle the *Menorah*, since the Greeks had defiled “all the oils that were in the

¹³ {The Maccabees, led by Matisyahu, the High priest, and his sons.}

¹⁴ *Yosifun*, ch. 20. (See *Sefer Hachashmanaim* 1, ch. 2. However, as of present, I have not found this work cited in *halachic* works (aside from a single mention in *Sefer Baal Halachos Gedolos*, “*Hilchos Sofrim*”, although it is mentioned in *Seder Hadoros*, etc.). This work is cited in *Meor Einayim* — however, the {mainstream rabbinical} approach to that book {and its author, Rabbi Azariah ben Moshe dei Rossi (1511-1578)} is known. A discussion, however, of this matter is outside our scope.

¹⁵ See *Megilas Antiochus*; *Midrash Chanukah*, cited in many places.

Sanctuary...,” until “...one hidden flask of oil that had the seal of the High priest”¹⁶ was found. This (that they found the flask of {pure} oil) was obviously not an open miracle

[if a person wishes to be stubborn, he might argue that it was natural that the Greeks hadn’t noticed it¹⁷ {and therefore hadn’t} defiled it; especially, according to *Tosafos*,¹⁸ we must say “that it was placed with the seal **in the ground**.” Since that was a **completely** unusual occurrence, especially since there was a dedicated chamber for oils¹⁹ {in the *Beis Hamikdash*} — the Greeks didn’t think to search there.²⁰ (On this basis, the certainty that the flask was pure, and hadn’t been defiled even indirectly by the Greeks, by having “moved”²¹ is better understood)],

it was, however, a wondrous thing (“wonders”): **All** the oils were defiled by the Greeks, except this one flask (hidden **in the ground!**), remained whole, untouched!

[Afterward, there was a **further** miracle — they kindled {the *Menorah*} with this {oil that was enough to burn for one day} for eight days. There were likewise additional salvations and wonders].

¹⁶ *Shabbos* 21b.

¹⁷ See Rashi, *Shabbos*, *ibid*: s.v., “hidden...”

¹⁸ *Shabbos* *ibid*, s.v. “Shehaya.”

¹⁹ *Middos* 5:5.

²⁰ See *Bava Metzia* 42a: “Shmuel said: “Only in the ground is there safeguarding for money...,” and now (after Shmuel’s time), etc.

²¹ {An object can acquire certain forms of ritual impurity by being moved, directly or indirectly, by an impure person. Thus, had the Greeks merely moved this flask, even without breaking the seal, it would have become impure. The assurance that the Greeks hadn’t even moved it was because the flask was hidden in the ground. See *Tosafos*, *loc. cit.*}

6.

IN THIS TIME

This order — salvations, miracles, and wonders — applies when discussing the events as they occurred “in those days.” Afterward, when we are discussing {these events as they inspire us} “to give thanks and praise to His {Hashem’s} great name,” the order is different:

To begin with, we thank and praise Hashem for the “miracles,” {the supernatural events} that everyone recognises as Divine.

Then, after reflection, we recognise that the true definition of many events are {that they are} “Your wonders” — although one who wishes to fool himself, can delude himself {into thinking} that they are natural occurrences — and we thank and praise Hashem for them.

And then, we come to the recognition that even “for your salvations” — {events} which are not miracles or even wonders, rather events encloded nature — we must also thank and praise Hashem. Since “**to Hashem** is salvation,” nature itself is {in reality} above nature, even a salvation must inspire thanks and praise.²²

7.

SUPERNATURAL NATURE

A deeper explanation:

For Jews, the flow of their lifeforce, to begin with, comes from a level of G-dliness that is beyond nature. It is only that this flow enclodes itself in a natural garment. Meaning, in addition to the fact that the natural order in general is also a G-dly one, and is therefore, in truth, beyond nature (as the

²² Note *Yahal Or* p. 154-5.

world defines nature)²³ — for Jews, this (nature) is only an external garment for the **miraculous** approach²⁴ with which Hashem governs the Jewish people.

Therefore, a person who has “illuminated” eyes, sees the truth — that this nature is, in reality, something miraculous. This is obvious to him to the point that the natural “garment” has **absolutely** no significance for him.²⁵

As we have discussed many times²⁶ regarding the explanation of our Sage’s statement,²⁷ “he trusts in the Lifeforce of the Worlds {Hashem} and sows:” The laws of nature (that **Hashem** established — “{the seasons of} seedtime, harvest... **will not cease**”)²⁸ are not, for a Jew, the true reason for a Jew to sow. The true cause of the growth of the crops — and **for which reason** the person plants — is because “he trusts in the Lifeforce of the Worlds.”

²³ {I.e., the world is not controlled or conducted by independent forces of nature. Rather, nature’s laws themselves are regulated and guided by Hashem.}

²⁴ See *Maamarim* 5672, end of ch. 88.

²⁵ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 16, p. 176 ff.

²⁶ *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 1, p. 216; p. 240; vol. 18, p. 295.

²⁷ *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Quoted in *Tosafos*, s.v. “*emunas*,” *Shabbos* 31a; *Midrash Tehillim*, ch. 19; *Bamidbar Rabbah* 13:16.

²⁸ *Bereishis* 8:22.

8.

REVELATION AND ESSENCE

Chassidus explains²⁹ that the highest levels {of G-dliness} are manifest specifically within the lowest of places. This is also true of miracles: Miracles that are en clothed in nature {and appear to be natural happenstances} have a higher source than overt miracles;³⁰ and nature itself has an even higher source.

Open miracles derive from the revealed levels of G-dliness, {the G-dly light} that is limited to the mode of “revelation” — the miracle must be seen openly.³¹ Miracles that are en clothed in nature, however, come from a G-dly light that is beyond revelation. Therefore, these miracles are en clothed in a natural garment.

Nevertheless, since the “garment” is such that the garbed miracle inspires “wonder” (“wonders”) in those who witness it, to the extent that “it is obvious” that this event is “purely supernatural,”³² it is understood that this comes from a G-dly light that is at least **in the category** of revelation.

Specifically the category of “salvations,” which is en clothed within nature itself, derives from Hashem’s Essence that is completely beyond {even the concept of} revelation. Therefore, the (supernatural) salvation, (which comes from Hashem Himself) appears as if it were completely natural.

This is the order of the three categories “(to offer thanks and praise to Your great Name) for your miracles, wonders and salvations:”

²⁹ See at length *Shaarei Or* s.v. “*yoviu levush malchus*,” ch. 12 ff, et al.

³⁰ See *Torah Or, Megillas Esther* 93:a,c,d; 100:a. See also at length, s.v. “*Kimei tzeischa*,” 5738 (*Sefer Maamarim Melukat*, vol. 5, p. 305)

³¹{Since it is limited to “revelation,” it can only appear as an obviously miraculous event, one that breaks the laws of nature. It cannot appear as something natural while remaining, in truth, above nature.}

³² *Torah Or*, *ibid* (100:a; 93:d) regarding the *Purim* miracle. See *Yahal Or*, p. 154-5.

To begin with, we offer thanks and praise in connection to the revealed levels of G-dliness from which “your miracles” are derived; then, {we thank and praise Hashem} in connection to the G-dly light that is beyond revelation — “for your wonders”; and finally, we offer thanks and praise “to Your **great** Name”³³ {the greatest levels of G-dliness, G-d’s very Essence} which is primarily {revealed} through “Your salvations.”

— Based on a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Mikeitz*, Shabbos *Chanukah*, 5724 (1963)

³³ See *Torah Or*, beginning of *parshas Shemos*; *Toras Chaim* and *Or Hatorah* there.