

**You shall love HaShem  
with all your possessions**  
by Dr. Meir Tamari

**ATHENS AND YERUSHALAYIM  
AT THE STORE**

Behind the lights of Chanuka, its songs and the foods, stand wars and battles for the minds of men; wars which were later also the experience of people of other faiths and nationalities of the Western World. For the first time in human history, people battled then for their ideals rather than for territory or mere independence. For the first time the soldiers were pious men intent on religious freedom rather than plunder or loot. For the first time the battle-cry was ideological, "he who is for the Lord, come to me". Many centuries later, non-Jews in the Western World fought battles under the same banner. How can we explain this to our children and grandchildren living as they do in a world that does not consider ideology worth fighting for? Perhaps by explaining the difference between needs and wants, or between more and enough or between Moshe who aimed at shaping men and women in His Image and Pericles who dreamed of beauty and perfection of bodies or things.

Hashem created the world in a way which requires people to satisfy their needs and wants in normal and natural ways. Needs are basically limited and so do not absorb people whereas wants are open-ended; their satisfaction can consume us unless they can be contained. Such containment lies beyond our ego or self-interest. Therefore, the Torah was revealed to us

from Heaven and its mitzvot commanded by Hashem outside of our human intelligence. These mitzvot limit our use of our own property and of our natural gifts; they are the containments which we could never achieve unaided, irrespective of our knowledge or mental abilities. "The Greeks had only Seichel but no mitzvot, so Aristotle could write books about morality and ethics but still remain a naval" (Shem MiShmuel). Basically, that is Chanuka with its lights which are meant only to commemorate a miracle but not for utility in light or warmth.

It is commonplace to-day to consider the Greeks of Chanuka as seeing only external beauty as compared to the Jews and their engagement with inner spirituality. That seems to be mistaken considering that for centuries Plato and other Greek philosophers were considered by great Jewish scholars as peaks of wisdom. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the first real issue between Athens and Yerushalayim is whether human wisdom is sufficient to define morality and ethical living. The second issue is whether such wisdom is sufficient to perpetuate them.

The Greeks, unlike Bavel or Rome had no desire to destroy us or our religion but simply to infect or pervert us. They did not destroy the Beit Hamikdash but wanted only to cause us to forget Torah and the Divine enactments. It was the chukim which were enjoined by beyond human wisdom that threatened Greek concepts of the unlimited and all-knowing human intelligence and knowledge. Shemen has long been considered as symbolic of that

intelligence and wisdom and the Greeks wanted to rid this shemen of its purity; letamei et hashemen. That symbolism explains why the cruse of oil with its purity sealed by the Kohen Gadol is so crucial to Chanuka. In our generation this age-old conflict has continued between the wisdom of Greece and that of Israel, who declare that Reishit Chochma Yirat Hashem.

This conflict began already in the days of Avraham and continues to our own times. Avraham had told the Philistines that Sarah was his sister since he did not trust their moral standards. They, considering themselves to be civilized and cultured, were angered by his judgment and questioned it. His only answer was that since they did not fear G-d, immorality was possible and probable despite their civilization and culture. In modern times we have witnessed how in their divorce from G-d the most cultured nation in Europe reverted to barbarism and how the greatest dream of social utopia became the nightmare of gulags and persecution.

In the granddaughter's case the problem arose over buying a new dress; for others it could just as well have been a new suit or a new car or new furniture or going on vacation. She had to decide whether regarding a dress as an article of clothing was sufficient for her or did it have to be a statement of values; of her status, wealth or physical beauty? Perhaps the answer would reveal to her the ideology of Chanuka which marks thereby the distance between Athens and Yerushalayim 🌸