



HABERIM IN LEARNING

Special Virtual Edition

In Memory of

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks A"H

לע"נ הרב יעקב צבי בן דוד זצ"ל



Family Study Version

HANUKKAH:

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD WITH HOPE



STUDY BROCHURE

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

IN MEMORY OF
NINA TAWIL A"H
BY GINA & JORDAN
SAMSTEIN & FAMILY

IN MEMORY OF
ESTHER BAT SHAFIKA
KHEZRIE A"H
BY HER LOVING NEPHEWS
GABY & JIMMY KHEZRIE &
FAMILIES

IN MEMORY OF
HARAV YA'KOV ZVI
BEN DAVID Z"SL
BY HYMIE & LIZA
SHAMAH

Summary

Section I: History of Hanukkah

The history told in apocryphal works as I Maccabees and Flavius Josephus vs the story told within Jewish tradition.

Section II: Early Relationship of Greece and Israel

The Greek culture is praised and admired by our Sages and could have perfectly cohabitate with Judaism. The contribution of the ancient Greek culture has been a remarkable tool to express Torah ideals.

Rabbi Sacks on Maimonides reflects this idea.

Section III: The Darkness of Enlightenment

Jewish wisdom saw the failure of Greek intellectualism when they limited wisdom to that which one can experience with his senses or rationalize with his mind and they denied spirituality as a source of knowledge. Calling it darkness, the sages expressed rejection to Greek denial of spiritual realm and particularism of Israel as carrier of Torah.

Rabbi Sacks sees and analyses these positions in history and its version in today's society.

As introduction to the next section, we included excerpt from Rabbi Sacks article: Candles In Memory of a Clash of Civilization.

Section IV: Clash of Civilizations – The Greek Decrees

The Greek could not accept the identity of Israel and its Torah and through impositions, they attempted to subdue that identity.

Rabbi Sacks sees this very phenomenon happening at the turn of the 21st Century.

Section V : Education – Freedom – Hope

Rabbi Sacks highlights the centrality of education as the real culture battle. The Talmud relates the creation of the first ever system of public education by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Gamla.

Rabbi Sacks emphasizes the priority Shabbat candles, representing peace, over Hanukkah candles, evoking war victory.

Sources: Ner L'Elef
Rabbisacks.org

Hanukkah

Illuminating the World with Hope

Introduction:

Hanukkah is very much in vogue today, and not just because it provides a convenient excuse to give presents during “the holiday season.” Its celebration of the miraculous Jewish victory over the Greek challenge to Judaism fits the popular mold of beating the odds, the underdog having its day, and religious freedom overriding political tyranny.

Tonight, we will explore this holiday by following the guidance of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks *a”h* and some Talmudic & Rabbinical sources, and ancient secular sources as well; only to find that there is much more to the holiday than many of us are aware. If celebrating Hanukkah becomes a commercial response to the “holiday season” and the take-away messages are that candy-bags filled with chocolate coins, doughnuts and “Hanukkah parties,” and the gifts to one another, we might have missed the point.

Questions & Family discussion:



- Are Hanukkah parties essential to “feel” the Holiday and to highlight its messages?
- Does the popular practice of giving gifts to one another distract from the real celebration?
- Can you figure out the origin of distributing “chocolate coins” to kids and filled doughnuts?

A Brief History of Hanukkah

Rabbi Sacks, in his summary of the historical events, based on “Sefer Makabim”:



At one level, the Hanukkah story is very simple. From the days of Alexander the Great of Macedon, Israel was under the dominion of the Alexandrian Empire of the Greeks. This meant that in the third century BCE, it was under the control of the Ptolemies who were based in Egypt and Alexandria. Then, during the second century BCE, Israel came under the domain of the Seleucids who were based in Syria.

The Seleucid leader, Antiochus IV, who modestly called himself Epiphanes, meaning “G-d made manifest”, decided to force the pace of Hellenisation on the Jews of the land of Israel. Among other things, he forbade the public practice of Judaism, erected a statue of Zeus in the Temple, and offered swine before it as a sacrifice, in a desecration of Jewish values that Jews of the time called the Abomination of Desolation.

An elderly Priest called Mattityahu, and his sons and their supporters known to history as the Maccabees, rose in revolt. Over the next three years they scored a momentous victory over the Seleucids, reconquering Jerusalem and bringing it back under Jewish sovereignty. They cleansed the Temple and rededicated it, lighting the great Menorah, the candelabrum that stood in the Temple, for a celebration lasting eight days. That is the story of Hanukkah as captured in history in the first and second books of Maccabees.

Time Line of the Hanukkah Period

OVERVIEW OF HANUKKAH PERIOD

	DATE
Building of Second Temple Hebrew date (3408)	353 BCE
Sparta defeats Athens	352 BCE
Alexander the Great rules Greece	336 BCE

Why the Maccabees Aren't in the Bible

The First and Second Books of Maccabees contain the most

Ptolemies control Egypt and Israel	323 BCE
Selucid Syrian/Greeks conquer Israel	199 BCE
Antiochus IV reigns	175 BCE
Greek decrees against Judaism;	
Desecration of Temple	168 BCE
Matityahu begins revolt in Modi'in	167 BCE
War against Greeks	166 BCE
Temple recaptured; Miracle of oil occurs	165 BCE
Jewish war against the Greek continues	165-140 BCE
Hasmonean dynasty	140-36 BCE
Rule of Roman Governors and Herodian Dynasty	36 – 68 CE
Rome conquers Jerusalem	63 CE
Romans destroy Second Temple (3862)	68 CE

Note:

The initial military revolt was led by one Judah the Maccabee, an epitaph awarded him for his famous battle cry, “Who is like You among the heavenly powers, O God!” (“Maccabee” being an acronym formed by the first letters of the above Biblical verse).

מי כמוך באלים יי'
(זוהר חדש, ספרא תנינא כ"ג)

Other sources spelled מקבים with the letter ק' suggesting it refers to a battle hammer, called in Hebrew מקבת. The mentioned Zohar Hadash highlights the Maccabees' spiritual motivation, and this second suggestion refers to their courage in battle.

Despite the extraordinary odds stacked against them, the children of Matityahu miraculously succeeded in their battles against the Greeks. Without Divine intervention, the enemy would have swiftly crushed this small band of religious Jews. Instead, after a short period of intense fighting, the Maccabees freed Jerusalem from Seleucid control and isolated the Hellenized Jews to the northern port city of Acre.

detailed accounts of the battles of Judah Maccabee and his brothers for the liberation of Judea from the Greek ruling.

These two books tell the Hanukkah story but they didn't make it into the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh. The inclusion and canon of texts to our actual Tanakh started probably in Yavneh by the Sages and disciples of Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkay around the year 90 CE. Many books and documents did not meet the criteria to be canonized, these writings appear in a category of documents known as the Apocrypha, “Sefarim Hitsoniyim”. The main criteria was a message of holiness or prophetic, in the case of the Macabbes the assumption is that strong critic of Hahamim played an addition role for the exclusion. The Hashmonaim were Kohanim and the Kingdom of Israel belongs to the tribe of Yehuda and not the Kohanim, they were expected to turn over the descendants of King David the reign and they kept it in the Hashmonai family.



1. Makebet: Weapon, War Hammer



2. Maccabees Graves near the ancient Modi'in

Flavius Josephus, “Antiquities of the Jews” (C.E. 94/95) recall the conquer of Judea, the reinauguration of the Temple and Altar and the Holiday of eight days called “Lights”



That is not how the story was ultimately told within the Jewish tradition, as it was ruled that the two books of Maccabees, and others under the same title, should be called **Sefarim Hitsoni'im**, apocryphal works, and kept out of the Bible. The Hanukkah story that is told instead is a very different one, with a powerful message.

Talmud Babli (Shabbat21b) The Hanukkah miracle.

What is Hanukkah? ... When the Greeks entered the Holy Sanctuary they defiled all the oil that was there. And when the dynasty of the Hasmoneans grew strong **and defeated the Greeks**, they searched and found only one flask of oil with the stamp of the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) that had been set aside; and there **was only enough oil to burn for one day**. **A miracle occurred and they lit [the Menorah] from this oil for eight days**. The following year the Sages established these days for praise and thanksgiving.

מאי חנוכה... שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל
טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברה
מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום בדקו
ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה
מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול ולא היה בו
אלא להדליק יום אחד נעשה בו נס
והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה
אחרת קבעום ועשאו ימים טובים
בהלל והודאה.



Note that the Talmud mentioned the victory of the dynasty of the Hasmoneans in one word “ונצחום” and paid most of its attention to the miracle of the Oil.

- Can you suggest a reason?
- In the Amidah we add the text “Al Hanissim” during the holiday of Hanukka describing Hashem intervention in the battles against the Greek and the Victory of the Hashmonaim. What is missing in “Al Hanissim”? Why?

Rambam (Maimonides), Hilkhhot Hanukkah 3:1-2

During the period of the Second Temple, when the Greek kings were in power, they proclaimed decrees against the Jewish people, abrogating their religion and forbidding them to study the Torah or to perform the divine precepts. They laid their hands on their wealth and their daughters; they entered the Temple and broke through it, defiling the things that were pure. The people of Israel were sorely distressed by their enemies, who oppressed them ruthlessly until the G-d of our fathers took pity, saved and rescued them from the hands of the tyrants. The Hasmonean great priests won victories, defeating the Syrian Greeks and saving Israel from their power. They set up a king from among the priests and Israel’s kingdom was restored for a period of more than two centuries, until the destruction of the Second Temple.

When, on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the Jews had emerged victorious over their foes and destroyed them, they re-entered the Temple where they found only one jar of pure oil, enough to be lit for only a single day; yet they used it for lighting the required set of lamps for eight days, until they managed to press olives and produce pure oil.

בבית שני כשמלכי יון גזרו גזרות על
ישראל ובטלו דתם ולא הניחו אותם
לעסק בתורה ובמצוות. ופשטו ידם
בממונם ובבנותיהם ונכנסו להיכל
ופרצו בו פרוצות וטמאו הטהרות. וצר
להם לישראל מאד מפניהם ולחצום
לחץ גדול עד שרחם עליהם אלהי
אבותינו והושיעם מידם והצילם וגברו
בני חשמונאי הפהנים הגדולים והרגום
והושיעו ישראל מידם והעמידו מלך מן
הפהנים וחרזה מלכות לישראל יתר על
מאתים שנה עד החרבן השני:

וכשגברו ישראל על אויביהם ואבדום
בכ"ה בחדש כסלו היה ונכנסו להיכל
ולא מצאו שמן טהור במקדש אלא פך
אחד ולא היה בו להדליק אלא יום אחד
בלבד והדליקו ממנו גרות המערכה
שמונה ימים עד שכתשו זיתים והוציאו
שמן טהור:

- Does the narrative presented by Rambam helps you to answer the prior questions?

Summary:

Maimonides recognizes the intervention of G-d in saving the Jewish people from the hands of Greek infiltration by blessing the Jews' military resistance with miraculous success. The miracle of the jar of oil with the seal of purity that lasted 8 days is a ratification of the active presence of G-d in this event.

SECTION II

The Early Relationship with Yavan - Greece:

- Were the Greeks always enemies of Israel?

Noah had three children, Shem, Ham and Yafet. Israel is descendant of Shem and Yavan is descendants of the other son Yafet. The relationship between "Yavan" and Shem, Jewish ancestry is Biblical – going back to Noah and his sons.

Beresheet (Genesis)

<p>[...] Shem and Yefet took a cloak and placed it on both their shoulders, and they walked backwards and covered their father's nakedness; they faced away from him and did not see their father's nakedness.</p> <p>[...] He then said, "Blessed be G-d, the Lord of Shem! Canaan shall be his slave! May G-d expand Yefet, but he will dwell in the tents of Shem. Let Canaan be their servant."</p>	<p>ויקח שם ויפת את השמלה וישימו על שכמ שניהם וילכו אחרנית ויכסו את ערות אביהם ופניהם אחרנית וערות אביהם לא ראו:</p> <p>[...] ויאמר ברוך ה' אלהי שם ויהי כנען עבד למו: יפת אלהים ליפת וישכן באהלי שם ויהי כנען עבד למו:</p>
--	---

Language of Respect:

Noah blessed his son Yefet and consequently his grandson, "Yavan," our Sages understood that the Greeks possessed certain virtues that were worthy of Jewish respect.

Talmud Babli, Megillah 8b-9b

Ancient Greek is the only foreign language with which it is permissible to write a Torah scroll.

<p>Rav Shimon ben Gamliel said, "The only language [besides Hebrew] that one can write [the Torah, Prophets and Writings] in is Greek."</p> <p>What is the basis for the ruling of Rav Shimon ben Gamliel? The verse states, "May G-d expand Yefet and he will dwell in the tents of Shem" (Beresheet 9:27). This means the words of Yefet will be in the tents of Shem.</p>	<p>בן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר אף בספרים לא התירו שיכתבו אלא יוונית.</p> <p>מאי טעמא דרבן שמעון בן גמליאל אמר קרא יפת אלהים ליפת וישכן באהלי שם דבריו של יפת יהיו באהלי שם.</p>
--	---

Note: Indeed, the Greeks were the first culture to request a translation of the Torah into their own language. This occurred in Egypt under the Greek ruler Ptolemy II Philadelphius in the third century BCE. The story of Targum Hashib'im () is narrate in Masekhet Megillah 9a. Talmay the king had the initiative to seek an accurate translation of the Torah, as expression of admiration to the jewish wisdom.

The desire for a translation of the Torah shows the extent of Greek desire for wisdom.

Siftei Haim (Friedlander)

The Greek language can be a great tool to help understand the Torah.

"G-d shall enlarge Yefet, and he shall live in the tents of Shem – the beauty of Yavan will be in the tents of Shem." Hence it is permissible and desirable to use the external beauty – the Greek language, which is the beauty of the Greeks – as a helpful tool and as a means for obtaining the essence and inner core, which is the wisdom of the Torah and the mitzvot.

יפת אלוקים ליפת וישכון באהלי שם
(בראשית ט:כז) - יפיותו של יפת
יהא באהלי שם. שהרי מותר ורצוי
להשתמש בחיצוניות היפה – השפה
היוונית שהיא "יפיותו של יפת" –
ככלי עזר וכלבוש חיצוני לתכלית
ולפנימיות שהיא חכמת התורה
ומצוותיה.

History bears the mark of Greek influence. The legacy of Ancient Greek civilization can be seen by its impact on the development of language, politics, educational systems, philosophy, science and the arts. As the sources above illustrate, the Jews recognized the intellectual virtue of the Greeks.

Alexander the Great showed immense respect to Judaism and he bowed to the visage of the Jewish High Priest Shimon Hatsadik.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch

The Culture of Yavan (Greece) and the Culture of Israel

It was shown to [Alexander the Great], immediately with his first contact with Israel, that even though he had been sent to bring all the countries of the East under the wings of the culture of Europe, despite this, there dazzled and illuminated his eyes, even in the Near East, on the very shores of the Mediterranean, a culture that was greater and more elevated than his ...

Against his will did Yefet bow to Shem, and the great Greek Conqueror was no more than a scout, who captured and prepared the ground for the Spirit of Israel.

Covenant & Conversation for Noah 5780



[...] Maimonides did not think that science and philosophy were secular disciplines. He believed that they were ancient forms of Jewish wisdom that the Greeks had acquired from the Jews and sustained at a time when the Jewish people, through exile and dispersion, had forgotten them. ***Understanding G-d's world helps us understand G-d's word.***

This made a significant difference to the way Maimonides was able to convey the truth of Torah. [...] His knowledge of Aristotelian philosophy enabled him to formulate an idea that exists throughout both Tanakh and the rabbinic literature, but that had not been articulated so clearly before, namely that Judaism has a virtue ethic [...] **The Torah is our roadmap through reality.** It is as if secular and **scientific knowledge were the map, and Torah the route.**

This view, articulated by Maimonides, was developed in the modern age in a variety of forms. Devotees of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch called it *Torah im derekh erez*, "Torah with

general culture.” In Yeshiva University it came to be known as *Torah u-Madda*, “Torah and science.” Together with the late Rav Aaron Lichtenstein zt”l, I prefer the phrase *Torah ve-Hokhmah*, “Torah and wisdom,” because wisdom is a biblical category.

We can summarize that Yavan and the Greek culture could perfectly cohabitate with Judaism and the contribution of the ancient Greek culture has been a remarkable tool to express Torah ideals.

Note: While the Jews appreciated the Greek love of wisdom, they also recognized the danger inherent in it. The rule of the mind is certainly preferable to the rule of the body, but ultimately Judaism maintains a belief in something more: the soul. The Greek love of wisdom ended been seen by the Jews as a force of spiritual darkness.



- Is it correct to say that science and Torah complement each other? Can you articulate a better statement according to our prior study?
- How does “Siftei Haim” sees the role of the Greek culture and wisdom among the Jews?
- Does Rabbi Sacks express the same idea as “Siftei Haim” and Rabbi Hirsh?

SECTION III

The Darkness of Enlightenment

Beresheet Rabbah 2:4

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish explained the verse, “And the Earth was desolate and void and darkness was on the face of the deep”...”**And darkness**” refers to the **Greek Exile** which darkened the eyes of the Jews through its decrees ...

ר”ש בן לקיש פתר קריא בגליות
והארץ היתה תהו... וחושך זה
גלות יון שהחשיכה עיניהם של
ישראל בגזירותיהן...

Why is Greek civilization, which brought enlightenment to the world, characterized as “darkness”?

Siftei Haim, Vol. II,

As a competing form of light, Greece is likened to darkness.

Defining (Yavan) Greece as darkness opposes what is accepted in the world and what is known from the history of the Greeks, since the blossoming of enlightened human civilization was rooted in Greece. The development of philosophy, science, and culture and their dissemination, from the Romans to the great empires that followed, including the Arab nations, all founded themselves on the wisdom of the Greeks – it remains the basis of culture and science today. Yet, the Sages determined that this worldview is “darkness.”

The Maharal explains, “**The Greeks wanted to destroy the special relationship of the Jews to the Torah**, they wanted to dispossess the jews their competitors, of their Torah and gain intellectual superiority and ownership of the Universal message of the Torah. .”

הגדרת יוון כ”חושך” היא לכאורה הפוכה מהמקובל בעולם ומהידוע מההיסטוריה של יוון, שהרי כל הפריחה של התרבות האנושית הנאורה היתה בעיקר ביוון, וכל התפתחות הפילוסופיה, המדע, התרבות והפצתן מאז, בימי רומי ובימי כל הממלכות הגדולות שבאו אחריה כולל הערבים, כולם התבססו על חכמת יוון והרחיבו אותה, והיא הבסיס של התרבות והמדע עד היום הזה. והנה חז”ל קבעו ופסקו שכל זה הוא “חושך”...

כמו שביאר המהר”ל “והקירוב הזה עצמו” – לחכמה ולתורה – “היה גורם שרצו לאבד מהם” – מישראל – התורה, “כי אין גיבור מתקנא אלא בגיבור שכמותו, ולפיכך רצו לאבד מהם התורה.” כי אדרבא בגלל שהיו חכמים יותר משאר האומות לכן ראו דוקא בעם ישראל ובתורתו את המתחרה שלהם.

Jewish wisdom saw the failure of Greek intellectualism when they limited wisdom to that which one can experience with his senses or rationalize with his mind and they denied spirituality as a source of knowledge.

The Greek considered it necessary to blur different identities, including spiritual identity. They considered that Wisdom cannot be particularistic but universal; therefore Israel as spiritual identity must disappear; but Torah as a source of Universal wisdom must prevail.

Greeks denied the spiritual realm as the source of knowledge. Denying the spiritual realm undermines and limits humanity whose greatness lies in their Divine soul.

Hellenism vs. Judaism – Aesthetic vs. Ethics - A Clash of Civilizations

Based on Sefer Pahad Yishak: Hanukkah 4:6 - Whereas Greek wisdom builds its philosophy from the lessons of nature, the starting point of Jewish wisdom is the Revelation.

“There was an intense commitment by the Greeks to intellectual inquiry and an effort to understand the natural world. However, Greek philosophy and thought was dominated by their fixation on nature, where human choice plays no role. This intellectual fixation made it impossible for the Greeks to comprehend or appreciate the Jewish vision of Torah, which is totally rooted in the spiritual world created by G-d and sustained through human choice. While both Israel and the Greeks were highly intellectual, the Greeks viewed reality through the lens of the physical world where compulsion rules.” (Pahad Yishak)

Through their study of nature and the constellations, the Greeks saw the world as mechanical and automatic. They then extended the rules of nature to all aspects of life so that Greek wisdom and intellect inexorably led to the development of a philosophy that drove the Greeks to misunderstand and oppose Jewish intellectualism.

On Identity and Enlightenment:



[...] the answer to the three fundamental questions every reflective individual must ask at some stage in their lives: **Who am I? Why am I here? How then shall I live?** There are many answers to these questions, but the Jewish ones are: I am a member of the people whom G-d rescued **from slavery to freedom**. I am here to build **a society that honours the**

freedom of others, not just my own. And I must live in conscious knowledge that **freedom is the gift of G-d**, honoured by keeping His covenant of law and love.

Twice in the history of the West this fact was forgotten, or ignored, or rebelled against. In the 17th and 18th century, there was a determined effort to create a world without identities. This was the project called the Enlightenment. It was a noble dream. However, one aspect of it failed and was bound to fail: the attempt to live without identity.

The argument went like this. Identity throughout the Middle Ages was based on religion [...] to abolish war one had to move beyond identity. Identities are particular. Therefore, let us worship only the things that are universal: reason and observation, philosophy and science. Let us have systems, not stories. Then we will become one humanity, like the world before Babel. [...]

It cannot be done, at least as humanity is presently constituted. The reaction, when it came, was fierce and disastrous. Identity came back with a vengeance, [...] the nation state, the (Aryan) race, and the (working) class. In the 20th century, the nation state led to two world wars. Race

led to the Holocaust. The class struggle led to Stalin, the Gulag and the KGB. A hundred million people were killed in the name of three false gods.

We cannot live without identities, families, communities and collective responsibility. Which means we cannot live without the stories that connect us to a past, a future and a larger group whose history and destiny we share. [...] Lose the story and eventually you lose your freedom. That is what happens when you forget who you are and why.

The greatest gift we can give our children is not money or possessions but a story – a real story, not a fantasy, one that connects them to us and to a rich heritage of high ideals. [...] What you forget, you lose. The West is



- What does Jewish identity mean to you?
- What could be problematic for the Greek in Jewish identity?
- Did they believe that having distinct identities was unjustified? How did Greece try to take away Jewish identity? Is this happening somehow in our days, too?

We can summarize this section using the words of Rabbi Sacks:

The Greeks, and many in the Western world who inherited their tradition, believed in the holiness of beauty (Keats’ “Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know”).

Jews believed in the opposite: hadrat kodosh, the beauty of holiness: “Give to the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psalms 29:2).

Art in Judaism always has a spiritual purpose: to make us aware of the universe as a work of art, testifying to the supreme Artist, G-d Himself.

Note: The above may seem a grand generalization of Ancient Greek philosophy, which was surely more varied and complex. Nevertheless, the particular philosophy at hand here is most like that of Aristotle.

Aristotle was the father of empiricism, the theory that all knowledge derives from the experience of the senses. As the teacher of Alexander, the influence of Aristotle’s philosophy surely spread to the areas he conquered. It was this view of knowledge and the philosophy of life built upon it that so disturbed the Jews at the time.

SECTION IV

The Greek Decrees Against the Jewish People

Rabbi Sacks excerpt from “Candles in Memory of a Clash of Civilisations.”



[...] One of the most significant of all “clashes of civilisations” was a confrontation between the two great cultures that between them gave birth to Western civilisation: ancient Greece in the form of the Alexandrian empire, and ancient Israel.

[...] They represented two very different ways of understanding the universe, constructing a society and living a life. Much has been written about one contemporary clash, between “the West and the rest”. Far too little has been said about another clash, this time **within the West itself**. Essentially it is the same clash as the one Hanukkah recalls more than two millennia ago.

[...] Hellenism was about art and the imagination. **Its great ideal was beauty.** Hebraism was about **ethics and obligation.** Its ideal was righteousness.

Hebraic values such as the sanctity of life, the consecration of marriage, fidelity, modesty, inner worth as opposed to outward displays of wealth and power: all these are in eclipse.

[...] Lacking any sense of ultimate meaning, Ancient Greece lose the moral beliefs and restraints on which continuity depends. They sacrifice happiness for pleasure. They sell the future for the present. The West's less-than-replacement birth rates and its ecological irresponsibility are just two examples of how it too is going the same way.

[...] **Ancient Greece and its culture of tragedy died. Judaism and its culture of hope survived.**

The Hanukkah lights are the symbol of that survival, of Judaism's refusal to jettison its values for the glamour and prestige of Hellenism or what today we call secularization. A candle of hope may seem a small thing, but on it the very survival of a civilization may depend.

The Jews may have seen Alexander as a novelty, and his culture as a means to pave the way for "the Spirit of Israel," but the Greeks certainly did not share the same outlook. They viewed Judaism as a quaint culture to be subsumed within the library of world religions. As Greek influence spread throughout the known world, Jewish resistance to it was not met kindly by the Greeks and their supporters, who took action to quash the rebellion.

The Greek attempted to subdue and subsume the Jewish religion through a series of calculated religious, cultural, and symbolic decrees. Decrees were against: Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh, and Brit Milah.

Note: Shabbat is the Jewish statement of faith in G-d as Creator of the world and Director of its affairs. Brit Milah, too, expresses belief in Creation and the lofty task of mankind to finish the job G-d started.

Midrash Tanhuma, Tazria 5

Man maintains a role in the completion of the world.

<p>The wicked Turnus Rufus asked Rabbi Akiva, "Whose actions are more beautiful, those of G-d or of man?" He replied, "Those of man are more beautiful." Turnus Rufus said, "Can man create something similar to the heavens and the earth?" Rabbi Akiva responded, "Do not ask me about something which is beyond the capability of man ... rather ask me something which is within the capability of man."</p> <p>He asked, "Why do you circumcise yourselves?" Rabbi Akiva said, "I knew that it was this topic that you meant earlier and therefore stated that the actions of man are more beautiful than those of God." Rabbi Akiva brought him raw wheat and some cakes. He said, "This [wheat] is the work of G-d and these [cakes] are the work of man. Aren't the cakes better than the wheat?"</p>	<p>מעשה ששאל טורנוסרופוס הרשע את ר' עקיבא איזו מעשים נאים, של הקב"ה או של בשר ודם. א"ל של בשר ודם נאים א"ל טורנוסרופוס הרי השמים והארץ יכול אדם לעשות כיוצא בהם א"ל ר"ע לא תאמר לי בדבר שהוא למעלה מן הבריות שאין שולטין עליו אלא אמור דברים שהם מצויין בבני אדם.</p> <p>א"ל למה אתם מולין? א"ל אני הייתי יודע שעל דבר זה אתה שואלני ולכך הקדמתי ואמרתי לך שמעשה בני אדם נאים משל הקב"ה. הביא לו ר"ע שבלים וגלוסקאות. א"ל אלו מעשה הקב"ה ואלו מעשה ידי אדם. א"ל אין אלו נאים יותר מן השבלים.</p>
---	--

The Jewish calendar system is also symbolic of mankind's connection to spirituality. Sanctification of the new month expresses the spiritual power of personal renewal.

<p>The Greeks wanted to nullify Rosh Hodesh, Shabbat, and circumcision. Why the Greeks were opposed to the mitzvah</p>	<p>היונים רצו לבטל חודש שבת ומילה, וצריכין להבין למה התנגדו היונים למצות קידוש</p>
--	--

of sanctifying the new month, as this only includes arranging the order of the months.

The explanation is that the Greeks wanted to eliminate the power of renewal inherent within the Jew and the ability to release himself from habit and rote.

This power of renewal is related to Rosh Hodesh and to sanctifying the new moon, as is hinted in the words we say when we sanctify the new month: "That in the future they (the Jewish people) will be renewed like her (the new moon)." On Rosh Hodesh a person is given the power to renew himself like the moon that is renewed each month. By seeing that the moon is renewed, we come to understand that there is an influence of renewal in the world.

החודש, שיש בה רק ענין של סידור סדר החדשים, אלא כבר ביארנו שהיונים רצו לבטל הכח ביד היהודי לחדש את עצמו, ולצאת מתוך ההרגל וההתישנות, והכח הזה של חידוש שייך לר"ח ולקידוש הלבנה וכמרוזז במה שאומרים בנוסח של קידוש לבנה, "שעתידין להתחדש כמותה". כי בראש חודש ניתן הכח באדם לחדש את עצמו, דוגמת הלבנה שנתחדש בכל ר"ח, כי אם אנו רואים שהלבנה מתחדשת, רואים אנו שיש השפעה של התחדשות אז להעולם.



FROM THE THOUGHT OF
RABBI SACKS

[...] Vaclav Havel, former president of the Czech Republic, like Judah the Maccabee, inspired his contemporaries to fight against totalitarian rule and though he too faced a seemingly impregnable enemy, soviet communism, he knew that freedom is not won by numbers but by courage, physical, intellectual and ultimately spiritual. He once said: "As soon as man began considering *himself* the source of the highest meaning in the world and the measure of everything, the world began to lose its human dimension, and man began to lose control of it." In other words, **we have to live for something greater than ourselves if we are to win the freedom to be ourselves.**

Havel called his most famous essay "The Power of the Powerless," and that's not a bad description of Hanukkah too. **Freedom can defeat ruthless power.** It needs a few dedicated people with the inextinguishable courage to light a candle of hope in other people's lives and together we can change the world.

- 
- How is the Greek decree against the observance of Shabbat linked to the story of The Wicked Turnus Rufus and Rabbi Akiva?
 - What is the symbolism of Rosh Hodesh that the Greeks ruled against?
 - How does the Jew "re-invent" him/herself?

SECTION V – EDUCATION



FROM THE THOUGHT OF
RABBI SACKS

The Talmud tells us that in the first century, in the last days of the Second Temple, a Rabbi called Yehoshua Ben Gamla, established a network of schools throughout Israel. The result of this was that from the age of six, every child in the country received a publicly-funded universal education.

This was the first education system of its kind anywhere in the world, and also a clear indication of the now familiarly Jewish commitment to education and to ensuring our children are literate in their heritage.

Rabbi Sacks: According to the Talmud, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Gamla's memory is blessed, because without his intervention the Torah would have been forgotten in Israel. Without him, there would have been no survival of Judaism and ultimately no Jews.

What Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Gamla and the other Sages understood, and what was not understood at the time of Hanukkah itself, was that the real battle against the Greeks was not a military one, but a cultural one.

[...] Judaism, with its emphasis on the sanctification of life, and the belief that every human being was created in G-d's image, held eternal truths that we could not abandon. **This was the unique distinction between the culture of the Greeks and the world of Torah and Judaism.** As a result, Jews have always known that the real battle is not necessarily fought on the physical battlefield with physical weapons, but rather **in the hearts and minds of future generations.**

So Judaism, and the Jewish people became a civilisation rooted in texts, and in teachers, and in houses of study. We became the people whose heroes were teachers, whose citadels were schools, and whose passion was learning and the life of the mind. The end result was that Judaism did survive and thrive throughout the centuries, whereas Ancient Greece, the Greece of Athens, the Greece of Alexander the Great, declined.

That is the message of Hanukkah, and to articulate our story, we focus in a rather beautiful and symbolic way on just one tiny detail of the original chain of events: That one cruse of pure, undefiled oil was found by the Maccabees among the wreckage and defilements of the Temple, just enough to light the Menorah until more oil could be sourced.

One of the most interesting aspects of this shifting perspective from the original way of telling the story to the current way is reflected in the name of the festival itself. Hanukkah, from the **word *Hanukh***, means re-dedication. That is what the Maccabees did to the Temple. They rededicated it, as described in the books of Maccabees.

Yet over time, Hanukkah became connected to **the word *hinukh***, a word meaning education. What we re-dedicated was not a physical building – the Temple – but living embodiments of Judaism, namely our children, our students, the people to whom we teach and hand on our heritage and values.

From being the festival of a military victory, Hanukkah became the festival of a spiritual and civilizational one.

To defend a country physically you need an army, but **to defend a civilization you need education, you need educators, and you need schools. Those are the things that kept the Jewish spirit alive and the Menorah of Jewish values burning throughout the centuries in an everlasting light.** [...] If we do that, we will ensure that our children, and theirs, light up the world.

As a conclusion, let's use this Rabbi Sacks reflection: ...



FROM THE THOUGHT OF
RABBI SACKS

To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope. Every ritual, every command, every syllable of the Jewish story is a protest against escapism, resignation and the blind acceptance of fate. Judaism, the religion of the free G-d, is a religion of freedom. **Jewish faith is written in the future tense.** It is belief in a future that is not yet but could be, if we heed G-d's call, obey His will and act together as a covenantal community. The name of the Jewish future is hope...

[...] There's a beautiful law in Judaism, and it applies to a day like today, Friday and Hanukkah we light two kinds of lights, for the festival and for the Sabbath, both of which begin at nightfall. What if we only have one candle? What do we light it as: a Hanukkah light or a Sabbath light? It can't be both.

The answer is: we light it as a Sabbath light, because the Sabbath light symbolizes peace in the home. And in Judaism, even the smallest fragment of peace takes precedence over even the greatest victory in war. Jews preferred to be remembered for peace.

[...] **Let's spend less on weapons of war, and more on teaching the world's children the art of peace.** [...] Jews were and are still called on to be the voice of hope in the conversation of humankind.