

Dvar Torah by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

to his community at
Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe
Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

CHANUKA

The Talmud asks the well-known question of MAI CHANUKA? - As Rashi translates what is the miracle of Chanuka that we commemorate by saying Hallel? (Shabbat 21a).

The Talmud associates the miracle to the defilement of the Beit HaMikdash by the Greeks and the finding of the jug of oil.

Rambam addresses both the miracle of the oil and the military defeat of the Greeks. In addition, Rambam relates to the rescue of Israel from spiritual annihilation and the restoration of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

However, Rambam also refers to an additional aspect "they established a king from Kohanim and restored kingship to Israel." (Chanuka 3:1)

This last issue is very problematic. Both historically and halachically, this development was not seen as positive. The Kingship is reserved for a descendent of the House of David and not a Kohen. Furthermore, the policies of the Chashmona'im kings clashed with the Sages many times. Ramban (49:10) answers that the Chashmona'im were pious individuals

who saved both the Torah and the Mitzvot to Israel. However, he claims that they did sin by usurping the royal throne of David.

Rabbi Spiegelman explained the Ramban's position is legitimizing that a miraculous event did occur, but any miracle cannot be perfect if people have roles in the event. Crossing the Red Sea was miraculous, but the Israelites hesitated from crossing. The Sages point out that G-d was angry that the Israelites still carried their idolatry with them. When a Divine act fuses with the human realm, it usually takes on human characteristics and human fallibility. The splendor of G-d's act is in no way diminished. The rabbis learn this from the word in AZ YASHIR (Sh'mot 14:29) CHOMA - "walls" to be read CHEIMA - "anger".

Now, we can understand the Rambam. He lists the Chashmona'im rule with no explanation. The deliverance of the Jewish people from a fierce and unrelenting oppressor is a clear miracle worthy of celebration even if there were some undesirable outcomes.

The miracle of the reestablishment of the State of Israel is felt by us every day. However, this miracle interplays with human intervention and human challenges. Even though we pray for our leaders to succeed through their daily challenges, the miracle remains undiminished in every event. 