

Chanukah

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Women uncover the Hidden Light of the Eternal Menorah

"Women are obligated in the light of Chanukah since they were part of the miracle like Yehudit on Chanukah." ¹ The heroines of Chanukah like Yehudit and Chana play a major role in the Chanukah miracle. Yehudit brought triumph to Israel through her steadfast belief and courage for the sake of the Land of Israel. When she heard that Uziyahu² was willing to relinquish Yerushalayim, she did not shy away from speaking in front of all the Kohanim, criticizing them for agreeing to hand over Jerusalem to the enemy. She single-handedly devised a plan to save her country by seducing and beheading Holiernes³ our arch enemy.⁴

Chana and her seven sons transmitted the light of their faith through steadfast refusal to bow down to Antiochus' idol. After six of her sons were murdered in her presence, Chana took her youngest son aside with the following words: "I carried you for nine months, nursed you for two years and have cared for you and taught you about G-d and the Torah up to this very day. Do not exchange your commitment and loyalty to Judaism for the fleeting offerings of a king who will soon perish himself..." With that, Chana watched her seventh son go to his death, whereupon she prayed, breathed her last breath and fell dead beside her children.⁵

Chanukah is the embodiment of the feminine. According to Kabbalah there are three dimensions of holiness: Space, Time and Soul. Perhaps Chana and her seven sons were the personification of the seven lights of Chanukah with the Shamash. This is the holiness of Soul as it states, *"the candle of Hashem is the light of humanity"*⁶ Yehudit, in her devotion to the Land of Israel corresponds to the holiness of Space, whereas the miracle of the oil represents the holiness of Time.

The acts of Yehudit and Chana drew on otherworldly strength from the hidden Supernal Light. In their merit this hidden light was revealed within our darkened physical reality. The Shlah Hakodesh brings down that Chanukah spells out the name "Chana" and the word "Ko" – one of Hashem's names that also means "this" – Chanukah – this is Chana. Also the name Yehudit (the female version of Yehuda) includes the letters of Hashem's name in addition to the

¹ S'mag, the positive mitzvot, mitzvah 5 from the Rabbis

² Uziyahu son of Micha from the tribe of Shimon was chief magistrate of Bethulia.

³ The chief general of the army of Nebuchadnezzar king of the Assyrians.

⁴ The book of Yehudit 8:9-27— the fourth book of the Apocrypha, 2d century BC, included in the King James Version; but not in the Hebrew Bible.

⁵ The second Book of the Maccabees, Chapter 7

⁶ Proverbs 20:27.

“*dalet*”⁷ representing the division of the four Kingdoms which Israel will unite through Mashiach descended from Yehuda.⁸

Chanukah means education. The thirty-six candles we light throughout the eight days of Chanukah reflect the hidden lights which illuminated the world for only thirty-six hours,⁹ before Hashem set them aside for the righteous in the World to Come.¹⁰ By giving us a glimpse of the Perfected World, the Chanukah candles educate and prepare us for the Messianic reality when the hidden lights will be revealed in the merit of righteous women. Leah is associated with the Chanukah candles and Rachel with the menorah itself, as she enabled Leah’s lights to shine.¹¹ Leah connected with the supernal light through the essence of her being – her name which has the numerical value of thirty- six, and Rachel through the years of her life which amounted to thirty-six.¹² From the three dimensions of holiness Leah represents the hidden light of Soul, whereas Rachel represents the hidden light of Time. We are still awaiting the hidden light of Space which will be recovered by means of the accumulated efforts of women from the four corners of the world dedicating ourselves to “Him” – “*lo*” in Hebrew equals the numerical value of thirty-six. May we ignite the eternal Menorah in the merit of the heroines of Chanukah throughout the generations!

⁷ The fourth letter of the Hebrew alphabet

⁸ B’nei Yissaschar on Kislev

⁹ R. Eliezer of Worms, the Rokeach

¹⁰ Rashi, Bereishit 1:4

¹¹ Ramchal in his commentary on the Prophets.

¹² Seder Olam Raba 2:1