

23rd Kislev 5769/20th December 2008

Minister: Rabbi Lionel Rosenfeld

Emeritus Chazan: Rev. Moshe Dubiner

Parashat Vayeshev Shabbat Mevarchin

Hertz Cohen Stone Gutnick Shabbat Begins 3.38pm

Sedra 141 229 198 242 Shabbat ends 4.47pm

Haftarah 152 248 1142 1392



Because Chanukah usually occurs in December, it is sometimes thought of as the "Jewish Xmas." It isn't, of course. And yet it is fair to say that the reason for Chanukah's popularity - especially in America, where it is the most widely observed Jewish festival after Passover and Yom Kippur - is precisely its proximity to Xmas, becoming bigger and brighter in response. Attracted by the joy of the season, not wanting their children to feel left out of all the merriment and gift-giving, Jews began to make much more of Chanukah than their grandparents ever had. Today Chanukah is well established as part of the annual "holiday season," complete with parties, decorations, and music of its own. Its enhanced status is a tribute both to the assimilating tug of the majority culture and to the remarkable openness of that culture to Jewish customs and belief.

Ironically, Chanukah was established to commemorate the very opposite of cultural assimilation. It dates back nearly 22 centuries, to the successful Jewish revolt against Antiochus IV, one of the line of Syrian-Greek monarchs who ruled the northern branch of Alexander the Great's collapsed empire. Alexander had been respectful of the Jews' monotheistic religion, but Antiochus was determined to impose Hellenism, with its pagan gods and its cult of the body, throughout his domains. When he met resistance in Judea, he made Judaism illegal.

Sabbath observance, circumcision, and the study of Torah were banned on pain of death. A statue of Zeus was installed in the Temple in Jerusalem, and swine were sacrificed before it. Some Jews embraced the new order and willingly abandoned the God and faith of their ancestors. Those who wouldn't were cruelly punished. The fight to reclaim Jewish religious autonomy began in 167 BCE. In the town of Modi'in, an elderly priest named Mattathias refused a Syrian order to sacrifice to an idol. When an apostate Jew stepped forward to comply, Mattathias killed the man and tore down the altar. Then he and his five sons took to the hills and launched a guerrilla war against the armies of the empire.

When Mattathias died, his third son, Judah Maccabee, took command. He and his band of fighters were impossibly outnumbered, yet by 164 BCE, they had recaptured the Temple, which they cleansed and purified and rededicated to God. On the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev, the menorah -- the candelabra symbolizing the divine presence -- was rekindled. For eight days, Jews celebrated the Temple's restoration, as the Book of the Maccabees records.

In truth, though, their cause hadn't prospered -- not yet. The fighting went on; only in 142 BCE did the Jews regain control of their land. Geopolitically, that was the moment of real triumph.

But Chanukah isn't about political power or military victory. It isn't even about freedom of worship, notwithstanding the fact that the revolt of the Maccabees marks the first time in history that a people rose up to fight religious persecution. What Chanukah commemorates at heart is the Jewish yearning for God, for the concentrated holiness of the Temple and its service. The defeat of the Syrian-Greeks was a wonder, but the spiritual climax of the Maccabees' rebellion occurred when the menorah was rekindled and God's presence among his people could be felt once again.

Chanukah is the only Jewish festival not found in the Tenach (Bible) and the only one rooted in a military campaign. And yet its focus is almost entirely spiritual, not physical. For example, there is no feast associated with Chanukah, the way there is with Passover and Purim, the two other Jewish festivals of deliverance. Its religious observance is concentrated on flame, nothing more. And the menorah's lights may only be gazed at; it is forbidden to use them for any physical purpose -- not even to read by.

The lack of a physical side to Chanukah is unusual but appropriate. For the Maccabees' war against the Hellenists was ultimately a war against a worldview that elevated the physical above all, that venerated beauty, not holiness; the body, not the soul. The Jews fought to preserve a different view of the world -- one with God, not man, at its centre. Because they triumphed, the Jewish religion survived. More than 2,000 years later, the Hellenists and their pagan gods are buried in the dust of history. But the wisdom and insights of Judaism continue to enlighten the world.

From an article by Jeff Jacoby, Boston Globe

Next Shabbat - Miketz

26th—27th December

Commences 3.41pm Mincha & Kabbalat Shabbat 3.30pm

Announcements

Bring your kids, grandkids and great grandkids this Shabbat to celebrate **CHANUKAH** with a bumper kiddush with doughnuts, latkes, sweets and special Chanukah cake for all the children to help cut.

Breakfast Sponsor

Breakfasts this week for the morning minyan are sponsored by Susan & Robert Milner regular visitors to Western Marble Arch from USA.

Birthdays—Mazal Tov to:

David Sint	Daniel Lucas
Fiona Stein	Morrie Neiss
Peter Reichwald	Judy Allan
Ella Marks	Harry Berry
Ettie Jones	

Wedding Anniversary- Mazal Tov to:

Marcia & Michael Green
Katya & Bernard Silver

Refuah Shelema

Caroline Buchler	Miriam bat Sara
Sidney Jaque	Shlomo ben Sara
Nat Winsor	Noach ben Miriam
	Chaya
Gertie Endfield	Rachel bat Yehudit
Raphael Etesami	Raphael ben Michal
Seymour Freed	Shmuel Ze-ev ben
	Sara Rivka
	Shira bat Leah

Friday 19th December

7.30 am Shacharit followed by breakfast & Haftarah Shiur by Ervin Landau
3.45 pm Mincha & Kabbalat Shabbat, D'var Torah by Rabbi Lionel Rosenfeld

Shabbat 20th December

8.45 am Shiur with Henry Knobil
9.15 am Shacharit
3.45 pm Mincha, followed by Seudah Shlishit, & D'var Torah by Rabbi LR
4.47 pm Maariv & Havdalah

Sunday 21st December

8.30 am Shacharit followed by breakfast and Thought for the Day
Winter Break Cheder Re starts 4th January Contact Batsheva Burns for further information on 0796 88 555 96 or email cheder.marblearch@gmail.com

Monday 22nd December— Chanukah

7.30 am Shacharit followed by breakfast & D'var Torah by Michael Milston
10.30am Ladies Shiur kindly given this week by Henry Knobil

Tuesday 23rd December—Chanukah

7.30 am Shacharit followed by breakfast & Shiur by Rabbi Yosef Vogel

Wednesday 24th December—Chanukah

8.30 am Shacharit followed by breakfast and Parsha Shiur by Ervin Landau

Thursday 25th December—Chanukah & Bank Holiday

8.30 am Shacharit followed by breakfast & D'var Torah by Bernard Silver

Friday 26th December—Chanukah & Bank Holiday

8.30 am Shacharit followed by breakfast & Haftarah Shiur by Ervin Landau

Mincha & Ma'ariv through the week
Sun 21st - Thurs 25th December 3.45pm

Security Rota

Daniel Conway. David Harouni.

Kiddush Rota

Linda Sharpe. Carol Truman.

Please note the change in the time of Shacharit for Wednesday, Thursday & Friday

Office Hours over the Public Holidays

Please note that the Synagogue office will close at 3.00pm on Wednesday 24th December, re-opening on Sunday 28th December until 3.00pm on Wednesday 31st December, reopening on Friday 2nd January

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Rabbi Rosenfeld's Parsha Shiur for Ladies

A weekly series. New participants are most welcome. Next Shiur Monday 22nd December which will be kindly given by Henry Knobil

Rabbi Rosenfeld's GCSE—Judaism Class

There is still time to enrol for the January term. Email Rabbi Rosenfeld on rabbilr@marblearch.org.uk or call the office.



Sunday 21st December

Lighting of the first Chanukah Candle.

First day Chanukah Monday 22nd December

Consecration

The consecration of the stone in loving memory of Leonard Sanitt z"l will take place on Sunday 21st December 2008 at Bushey at 12 noon.

Please make a note now in your diary: Monday 19th January 2009 at 7.45pm Rabbi Dr. Akiva Tatz—'Dangerous Therapy in Medicine and Surgery'

Rabbi Dr. Akiva Tatz was born in Johannesburg, South Africa. After practising as a doctor in both South Africa and the U.S., he moved to Israel where he practised both in hospital and general medicine in Jerusalem and engaged in a number of year's Talmudic study and later teaching in Jewish thought and medical ethics in Jerusalem. He is the Founder and Director of the Jerusalem Medical Ethics Forum and has written a number of books on the subject of Jewish Thought and Philosophy.

Thursday 22nd January 2009 at 5.00pm Holocaust Memorial Day

We will be hosting a service and reception to commemorate those who perished in the holocaust. This will be attended by the Lord Mayor of Westminster as well as Government Ministers and those who will be attending the Conference of the Association of Police Authorities who are conferring at WMA on that day. If you would like to attend the reception, please contact the office as soon as possible.