

# Chanukah....



## ...and the Miracle of the Jewish people



By Rav Ilan Herrmann

The story of Jewish History is unique among all civilisations. No nation has been confronted with the degree and extent of adversity that the Jewish people have and survived. In fact not only have they survived but, remarkably, they have proved to be a People that continue to flourish against all expectation.

One of the extra-ordinary facets of this phenomenon is the size of the Jewish people being numerically a tiny nation and facing seeming insurmountable odds in her quest for survival considering the unrelenting persecution she has had to endure.

History has produced powerful and mighty empires which have tried to swallow up the Jewish people, yet, they themselves have ended up being swallowed while the tiny nation of 'Am Yisrael' have and still continue.

This is one of the themes of Chanukah - the 'few against the many' and the 'weak against the mighty'. Ancient Greece with their vast armies were formidable. The Maccabees were a small band of soldiers. Yet the few defeated the many; the weak overcame the mighty'.

The Shabbos that precedes Chanukah this year is Vayeishev. Shabbos as is known contains the particular energy and connection to the coming week as we say in in Lechah Dodi 'Ki Hi Mekor Habrachah' - 'Shabbos is the source of blessing (for the coming week).'

The commentator Birkas Chaim explains that in both Chanukah and the portion we see this idea of the numerically small prevailing over the greater in size and number. Yosef has two dreams. In the first he and his brothers were in the field and were binding grain into sheaves. Yosef's sheaf arose and stood. The many brothers' sheaves surrounded Yosef's sheaf and bowed to it. In the second dream Yosef envisioned the sun, moon and eleven stars (referring to his brothers and his parents (the many) ) bowing to him.



Chanukah also generally falls over the portion of Miketz (this week) and again we see the same allusion. Pharaoh dreams of seven lean cows swallowing seven fat cows. In his second dream the seven thin ears of grain swallow up the seven healthy and full ears of grain.

The message in all of these is the same. The few and weak prevail over the many and mighty.

The Maccabees defeat of the Greeks was a miracle encloded in nature. The second Chanukah miracle of the oil that was sufficient for one day and burnt on for eight days was completely beyond nature. This open manifestation of the Divine that shone upon the Jewish people was the last Nationally revealed 'nature-transcending' miracle. Thereafter miracles were only encloded in nature.

Why is this the parting miracle? The message G-d was transmitting in that final openly manifested miracle before plunging into an exile abyss was vital and needs to be heard still: 'You, My people, are supernatural - "not considered amongst the nations". You are bound to eternity and cannot be vanquished. Although you are small in number you are different and not subject to the natural laws of history that have resulted in the demise of vast superpowers. Your size is not what counts. It is your inner might and strength. Yours is the task of being a Maccabee - of holding true to your unique mission and destiny. The key to your individual and national strength is the pure oil of the Torah - the source of light that empowers you and connects you to the One and only G-d, Creator, Sustainer and Master of all.'