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In This Issue

- Hanukah and Hoping pg 1
- Ravenous Ravs pg 3
- News you can use pg 4
- Synagogue Outreach pg 5
- Chanukah Drama pg 6
- IFR Conference pg 8

Hanukah and Hoping by Rabbi Eli Mallon

Hanukah gives us special help in hoping.

On Hanukah, we recite "Hallel" -- a group of psalms (113-118) that are also recited in synagogue on Pesach, Sh'vuot and Sukkot (and in modified form on Rosh Hodesh).

The unifying theme of "Hallel" is a seemingly miraculous victory over apparently insurmountable odds.

Pesach commemorates the miraculous "10 Plagues" and parting of the Red Sea that overcame the

"insurmountable odds" of Egyptian might. On Sh'vuot, commemorating Matan Torah, the "insurmountable odds" of sensory perception, which had kept us living as if separated from G-d, were "overcome" by Divine Presence, Power, Justice, Compassion and Wisdom revealed to us at Har Sinai. Sukkot commemorates miracles of Divine protection that overcame the

"insurmountable odds" of the wilderness conditions in which our ancestors wandered for 40 years. Hanukah commemorates oil burning for eight days that miraculously overcame the "insurmountable odds" of having been enough to burn for only one.

In each case, it's "Divine," not "human" power that succeeds. The true theme of Hallel, then, is the supe-

riority of Spiritual over material power; of "Spirit" over "matter;" of "Infinite" over "finite." From the *human* viewpoint -- "Israelites vs. Egyptians" or "Israelites vs. wilderness" or even "Israelites vs. nature" -- the odds indeed seem insurmountable and the subsequent victory "miraculous." But from the *Torah* viewpoint -- "Egyptian power vs. G-d's power" or the "power of nature vs. G-d's power" -- the outcome is never in question.

In later mandating the various mitzvot of Hanukah, the rabbis weren't creating mere history lessons. They meant for us to affirm the supremacy of G-d's power over any problem we might ever be facing. Reciting Hallel, lighting our hanukiah, we praise G-d for what G-d *did*, in order to remind our hearts what G-d *can do* -- *is doing* -- now.

This year (2008), "economic collapse" is our "pharaoh." Just as the Israelites saw the chariots pursuing them, and the Red Sea -- a boundary they couldn't cross -- before them, many of us see ourselves and our country (if not our world) "pursued" by financial problems that we can neither avoid nor overcome, with no apparent avenue of escape before us. We could as readily

G-d
Made
One
Days
Oil
Burn
For
Eight
Days.

There are
No limits
To the
ways
G-d is
Helping us.



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call "economic collapse" our "Greek army;" our "one day's worth of oil," if we see ourselves as bound by "economic" laws in a world absent of the Divine, with nothing to help us beyond our own efforts. In so doing, though, we'd be missing the Torah-lesson in Hanukah, Hallel and our hanukiah: Divine Power is *more real* than the world; always present with us, helping us at every moment, in every event, even today.

(Continued from page 1)

G-d led us out of Egypt; G-d can lead our world out of economic breakdown.

G-d was present with us at Sinai; G-d is present in our world today, too.

G-d sustained us in the wilderness; G-d can supply our world with abundance.

G-d caused the oil to burn for 8 days; G-d is helping our world, unfettered by limitation.

But Torah and the rabbis can do no more than *suggest* all this. It remains for us to choose change our thinking (b'ezrat Ha-Shem – with G-d's help, of course).

A Yiddish proverb says, "Der 'Innu-ha-din iz erger vi der din alain – Worrying about a problem is worse than the problem alone."

In the Talmud, *Avot d'Rabbi Natan*, teaching that we should "Learn to receive troubles," says, "Be like a bottle that has no opening to let air in" [it'll float in the sea, rather than taking in water and sinking]. Some of us, it's true, tend to worry more; others – less. Life experience, or a good friend, teacher or therapist, can often teach us the uselessness – if not outright harm – of worry. In any case, anyone can learn to stay calmer, even gradually. But how?

Growing up, some kids I saw seemed unflustered by anything that happened to them. I thought they were "cool." How I wished I could be like them! But as time went on, I learned that many were merely keeping an outer appearance of calmness, while boiling inside with anger, worry or fear. "Looking calm" didn't mean "being calm."

To a large extent, our feelings are the products of our thoughts. Given any situation, we can choose thoughts about it that'll create greater worry and tension, or less of those feelings. On Hanukah, this especially means thoughts about G-d's ability to help us.

So, in our present, apparently overwhelming economic crisis, *can* G-d help us?

Even a thousand years ago, the author of *Hovot ha-Levavot* had already answered this: "If you aren't able to obtain the money you want in the manner you originally expected, the Almighty has many other ways and means by which you can acquire that money." We can also remind ourselves that if G-d could cause one day's oil to burn for eight days, there's no limit to the ways G-d can help us. What's more, if G-d *would* make the oil last, is there anything G-d would not do for us? No!

Do we smile at the story of the oil, thinking that it doesn't stand up to historical scrutiny? If so, we've missed its meaning: *There's no need to ask how G-d can help! G-d*

can help in infinitely more ways than human beings can expect or imagine! G-d's help wasn't only in the past – it's *always* with us. There are no limits to the ways G-d is helping us, even today.

Telling ourselves – and seeing in our imagination – that despite the *appearance* of difficulty, G-d's help is present and profuse, immeasurably greater than any perceived problem, will give us a calmness based on sincere, positive hope.

As to why we light one additional light on each night of Hanukah, Hillel's school taught, "Ma'alain ba'kodesh v'ein moridin: We increase in holiness; we don't decrease." If, as we light our lights, we declare G-d's help and abundance in our mind and see it in our imagination, with greater sincerity and personal connection each night, we'll shortly find the belief filling our heart, too.

You might ask: "OK. It'll make us feel better. But will it actually change anything?"

Hasidut, based on the *Zohar*, teaches the immutable spiritual law of action and reaction: "It-ah-ru-tah d'l'ta-ta, it-ah-ru-ta d'l'e-la" – "An arousal below causes an arousal above." The midrash also says that only after the first Israelite – Nachshon ben Aminadav – had entered the waters and they were up to his lips, did G-d part the Red Sea. We might say, too, that only after the Mak-kabee'im had first lit the oil, did G-d cause it to burn for eight days. Change begins with our certainty that G-d, with infinite capacity and good will, can do anything. If we doubt – the hanukiah in front of us is our reminder. Let us, then, kindle increasing certainty in our hearts as we kindle one more light each night of Hanukah. And just as the light of our hanukiah is meant to radiate out into the world, kal v'homer, let our trust in G-d's unlimited goodness and ability to help also radiate out, healing the world's worry along with our own.

Hanukah Sameach

Avot d'Rabbi Natan 41:11

Hovot ha-Levavot 4:4, quoted in "Gateway to Happiness" by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

Shabbat 21b

IFR Rabbis Rifuah Shelema

Rabbi Raphael Pazo

Valerie Allen (wife of Rabbi Dick Allen)

Ravenous Ravens

Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish holiday Eats and Treats



A Chanuca' dish from Venice:

Riso coll'uvetta - Rice with Raisins

Ingredients

4 Tbs. olive oil
1 small clove garlic, finely minced
1 Tbs freshly chopped Italian parsley
1 1/2 cups short grain rice
1/2 cup dark seedless raisins
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 cups hot broth or water
Black pepper

Heat oil in large skillet. Add garlic, parsley, and rice. Cook over high heat, stirring with a wooden spoon until the garlic begins to discolor. Add the raisins and salt. Add the hot broth or water 1/4 cup at a time, and continue to cook, uncovered, over high heat until the rice is done, about 15 minutes in all. Taste for salt and pepper, and add if necessary. Serve hot or at room temperature.



Sfingi - Sicilian Fried Doughnuts or **Grispelli** in Calabria

Ingredients

3 lge eggs, slightly beaten
1 cup flour
1Tbs sugar
4 tsp baking powder
1 lb. ricotta
1 tsp vanilla
1/8 tsp salt
vegetable oil for frying
1/4 cup confectioners' sugar



Combine ricotta, eggs and sugar. Add baking powder and salt to flour. Gradually add flour mixture to ricotta and beat well. Add vanilla. Cover and let rest 1/2 hr. Heat oil, drop batter by teaspoonful into hot oil. Do NOT crowd.

If needed turn **sfingi** with slotted spoon. When golden in color, remove and place on paper towels to drain. Serve dusted with confectioners' sugar.

The Buzz on Buz's

"Mile High Hanukah Latkes"



Traditional latkes a'la Denver's Rabbi Buz Bogage:

Buz writes: "My best latkes are: throw cut potatoes, onions, a little garlic salt and pepper and an egg in the blender. Let it go for a while. Drop them into the hot fry pan with a modicum of veggie oil and let them brown for a while, under a medium flame.

From our Rabbi Out West... "That's good eatin' !"

News You can Use

Chanukah Ideas from our members

Adding Light to the Darkness

Rabbi Arthur Rosenberg writes: I am the rabbi and chaplain at the Motion Picture and Television Hospital in Woodland Hills. We have about 430 residents spread among independent living, assisted living, Alzheimers/Dementia unit and long term care. About a year ago we established **The Rabbi Arthur Rosenberg Fund for Palliative Care**. The fund's goal is to provide special items for residents who are facing life changing diagnoses or end of life issues. These items, though vitally important on a spiritual or emotional level, often are not provided by Medicare, reimbursable through insurance claims or even affordable for family members. That's when the Rosenberg fund steps in.

We supply music at the bedside, sitters where needed, chocolate, wine, DVD's, special blankets or pillows, special foods (recently one dementia patient wanted a Happy Meal from McDonalds!). No need is denied. Recently the fund also purchased three portable carts for use in the rooms of those patients with terminal conditions. The carts have cd/tape/radio boxes, music requested by the resident or family, spiritual and secular reading material, supportive booklets about impending loss as well as a small fridge for those keeping a bedside vigil.

I am pleased to report that, to date, after expenses have been met, in only one year **The Rabbi Arthur Fund** contains a whopping \$100,000 ready to use to meet these special years. For me the fund is a triumph of light especially because our recipients use these gifts of the heart on their journey from this life. Our work on the Palliative Care Team is a labor of love and a miracle of light which brightens the last days of our dear ones. Chag Sameach,

Sounds of the Season

Rabbi Foster Kawaler reminds us that we can hear Chanukah music each day and night of the eight nights. He writes, "Satellite Radio, XM offers their annual Chanukah feature. From December 21 – 28, XM will again be running their "Radio Hannuka" 24-hours a day." Foster writes, "They do a terrific job with this feature, with music, drama, and hazanut -- a complete sampling of Jewish culture, Chanukah and other festivals included."

Food for the Soul

Rabbi Judeth Newham, whose spiritual life, includes praying in the kitchen, will take the opportunity to include food for the soul along with Chanukah treats. Judeth writes, "It occurred to me as we prepare for Chanukah, how fortunate most of us are. As I began to organize a first night Chanukah "get together" and list

the usual treats and menu, I was stopped short by the thought that although we will be celebrating, as we should, we find ourselves and our communities in the midst of the greatest economic disaster since the Great Depression. There are many people in my community who will not eat or at least be hungry during a time of feasting and fete. So as we light our candles we remember our less fortunate neighbors ...

Many will not be making doughnuts but eating days old bread.

The eyes of children will hold hope but reflect want.

The old will make do with a little noodle soup, but perhaps not that, if the effort is too great..

Judeth goes on to say, "I do my best during the year to make and give food and soup, to donate clothes and time, or just reflect prayer and blessings if that is what I have at the moment." But Chanukah makes acute the need. In order to remember that a few, a dedicated few, kept our traditions alive during long periods of warfare and times of hunger and great need, I have decided that our first night will kick off a "food" drive.. For every candle, a can of food.

For each candle, a thought of someone who has fallen on hard times.

For every candle, a prayer for those whose addictions have placed them and their families in hard straights. As we light the lights of Chanukah and show them to the world, I want to also light the inner Menorah and look into the mirror of my own needs. Do my needs *always* account for the needs of others? Can I light just one more candle for someone else to see hope and a way out poverty? Can I illuminate, just a little more, the uncertain steps of another?

May the light of the season, which asks nothing of us, reflect our nature and our compassion and what we have learned as a people of G-d

The Great Outdoors

Rabbi Lewis Bogage shares 51 years of rabbinic memories of Chanukah festivals, Menorah making contests, Sunday School Chanukah fairs and art contests. Today we find "Buz" in the mountains of Colorado, assisting in the Adventure Rabbi program. Buz writes, "Here in Grand Junction we have made school a 'cheder' style during the week with class participation in Friday eve services. Remember this is Ski Country and kids and families are together on the slopes both Saturday and Sunday. AdventureRabbi.org is a program which gathers skiers, hikers, cyclists, and nature lovers of all varieties and organizes Shabbat and festival programs around each outdoor or sporting experience. I always take a Sukkot and Pesach hike, with stops along the way to explain the symbols and simple ways these young parents can include the Festivals in their daily home life. The ski and hiking experiences in the beauty of nature are very spiritual, especially when everybody participates in our activities and explains their own feelings in a spontaneous fashion. Depending on the climate in your part of the world, an outdoor Chanukah program could bring the beauty of nature together with the miracle of light."

Synagogue Outreach Program – Free Chanukah Kits

By Rabbi Barbara Aiello



“We need to reach out into our community!”

“We want to encourage Jews to reconnect with synagogue life!”

“Times are tough, money’s tight. How can we find new members?”

Sound familiar? When I was rabbi at a small synagogue in southwest Florida, we faced similar challenges. How could we make our synagogue more accessible to those who were newcomers to our community or who had been away from synagogue for a long while? I remembered what I had heard in seminary. A rabbi emphasized that of all the experiences available to us Jews, the ones most welcoming and memorable were Passover and Chanukah.

And that’s how the Chanukah Kit program began. We decided to make Chanukah available to anyone and everyone in our community who wanted to initiate or revive this wonderful Jewish family celebration. Our seed money came from the Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund, and from Chanukah Kit sponsors among synagogue members and local businesses. Each sponsor donated ten dollars to sponsor one kit, which included an inexpensive aluminum menorah, a box of Chanukah candles, booklets and a box of latke mix! Temple volunteers purchased and assembled each Chanukah Kit and included, along with the Chanukah goodies, information on our synagogue as well as other local Jewish services and organizations.

A public service advertisement in the local newspaper announced our efforts. Kits must be reserved in advance and picked up on a specific day prior to the first night of Chanukah. Our ad read:

Free Chanukah Kit available - Call Temple XYZ to reserve your free Chanukah kit to help you celebrate the holiday. If you're half Jewish or part of an Interfaith family or if you have Interfaith grandchildren or just want to reconnect with your traditions, you can start with The Chanukah Kit. Each kit includes a menorah, candles, How-to's on lighting the menorah and making an at-home celebration. Call to reserve your kit and to find out pick-up dates and times ...(name, address and phone).

On Chanukah Kit pick-up day, synagogue volunteers created a lovely arrangement of kits and decorations. Cookies and punch were served and each recipient got more than just a their kit. They found, a warm hug and a wonderful “meshpucha” feeling as the hand of Jewish friendship welcomed each one home.



Inexpensive chanukiyah for your Chanukah kit

IFR Mission Statement

The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education. IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.

Chanukah Drama

Note: The Chanukah Drama can be performed with hand puppets, stick puppets, actors or any of these in combination. The drama has also been effective when the performance includes a combination of children and adults. Below you will find a list of characters and props for your performance. The dialogue follows these lists.

Cast

Puppet girl -Rachel
 Puppet boy – Max
 Puppet Bubbe Esther
 Muffy the dog (puppet)
 Rabbi (actor)
 Chuppah holders (2 actors)
 Candy throwers (2 actors)
 Narrator (actor)
 Puppet bride
 Puppet groom
 Menorah lighter (3 actors)
 Puppets for all the kids

PROPS

tallit (for chuppah)
 puppet chair
 kiddush cup
 2 baskets with candy
 box or suitcase
 photograph
 napkin (under puppet's heel)
 lightbulb (to break)
 three menorahs
 candles for three menorahs
 aluminum foil for under menorahs
 two long tables (for puppet performance)
 black cloths on stage
 puppeteers are asked to wear black t-shirts
 boom box with music

Songs to learn:

Sheyhechianu
 Siman Tov and Mazel Tov
 The Dreidel Song
 Kindle a Candle of Light
 Hi nei Ma Tov

The Story

Narrator: Once upon a time in a town not far from here, Rachel and Max (and their dog, Muffy) were snooping around out in their grandmother's garage.

Rachel: Hey, Max, come here. Look at this.

Muffy: (snooping in the box) Woof!

Max: What did you find?

Rachel: A real old picture of our Bubbe.

Max: Hey, yeah... That's our Grandma! Wow!

Muffy: *Makes a barking. "Wolf whistle"*

Max: Hey, she's wearing a bathing suit!

Rachel: And who's that guy with her? He's cute!

Bubbe Esther comes on stage

Bubbe Esther: That cute guy is your grandpa. Your Zayde. And we were on our honeymoon at Niagara Falls!

Max: Cool. Did you have fun?

Rachel: Did you have a wedding?

Bubbe Esther: Oh, my yes. We had a wonderful wedding. I'll never forget it. Let me tell you all about it.

*Bubbe Esther, Muffy and kids go down
 Two children come up and hold a Tallit up.
 The tallit is the chuppah. The rabbi,
 (an actor) comes on stage.
 All the puppets (wedding guests) come up, too*

Rabbi: (actor) I'm all ready now. All the guests are here. But where is the bride and groom?

Groom: Here I am. I think I'm going to faint!

Bride: Oh, I'm so nervous. I hope I don't toss my cookies!

Rabbi: Sam, you have just escorted your lovely bride, Esther, under the chuppah. We use a chuppah to show that G-d's love is over all of us... especially our bride and groom. The chuppah is a symbol of the home you will share together. And now we say a prayer of thanks:

*All puppets sing the sheyhechianu
 Baruch ata Adonai
 Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam
 Shey-hech-i-a-nu*

*Vi-kee-a-man-u
Vi-hig-ee-an-u
Lazman Hazeh
AMEN*

Rabbi: And now we make your marriage holy. We share a cup of wine as a symbol of our joy.

All: *Baruch Ata adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam Borei puree ha'gafen...AMEN*

Rabbi: And now Sam, take a sip. As we all say: L'chaim, L'chaim, to life.

Rabbi: And now, Esther, take a sip. As we all say, L'chaim, L'chaim, to life...

And we come to one of the most well remembered traditions in a Jewish wedding. The breaking of the glass. There are many reasons why we do this. But the one I like best is this. May each piece you break it into be for a year and a blessing in your married life.

Rabbi puts glass under puppet's foot

Rabbi: So Sam, break the glass into a million pieces! One, two ... three...

*Glass breaks. All puppets sing
Siman Tov and Mazel Tov
Bride sits in chair. Two kids hold her up
during the song
Two more kids come out front with baskets
and throw candy...*

*All puppets go down
Bubbe Esther, Rachel, Max and Muffy return to the stage*

Bubbe Esther: We had a wonderful wedding. We had a wonderful life. We celebrated all the Jewish holidays, but the one I liked best... was Chanukah.

Max: Me, too. I love to light the menorah.

Rachel: I love to get presents.

Muffy: Barks eight times

Rachel: That's right, Muffy! Eight presents... one for each night.

Bubbe Esther: I love to eat the latkes...

All puppets come up

Bubbe Esther: And sing the songs, too.

Narrator: How about we sing the Dreidel song?

All: Yeah. Cool... OK... all right...

Narrator: I had a little dreidel.. I made it out of clay ... and when it's dry and ready... dreidel I will play... I made it out of sand.... crumbled in my hand... made it out of air... and when I tried to spin it.. it wasn't even there... Now all of you...

Narrator: And we light the menorah to remind us of a great miracle...

Bubbe Esther: Yeah, it was a miracle that I got married!

Narrator: Oh, Bubbe... and Chanukah celebrates a miracle... one tiny drop of oil burned for eight days...

Bubbe: And eight nights.

Narrator: So we light the menorah to remind us that a great miracle happened ... long long ago.

Bubbe: Come on everyone! Let's do it.

*All the puppets come on stage
and sing (with tape)
Kindle a Candle of Light
Three kids light the menorahs*

Narrator: This year Chanukah starts on Sunday, December 21. That's the night to light the first candle. So find your menorahs and shine them up. And remember, the real blessing of Chanukah is being together... Sharing together...

All: Sing "He nei ma tov"

Narrator: And remember... everyone... one ... two... three...

All: Chag Chanukah Sameach! Happy Chanukah!

Muffy: Woof!

Mark your calendars!

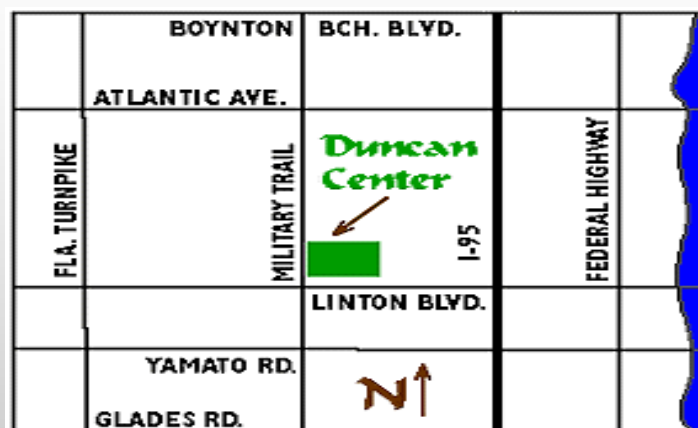
**2009 IFR Conference Delray Beach Florida
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Rabbi Barbara Aiello and Rabbi Frank Tamburello

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