

**VAYESHEV**  
A Hanukah Message  
By Rabbi Shlomo Truzman

Hanukah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, is best known as the Festival of the Temple's dedication, desecrated by a formidable tripartite foe namely the Hellenists, the Greek influence, and the Syrians, who transformed the once living light of our Temple, into a dark empty arena for pagan orgies and idolatrous worship.

Antiochus 1V King of Syria, with his delusions of grandeur added to his name the title "Epiphanes" "divine", but he people instead called him "Epimanes", the insane. This "divine" insane monarch, influenced by large bribes, deposed the Kohen Gadol the Temple's high Priest, and put a Hellenist Jew in his place, and thus those Hellenist that coveted the position of High Priest, was filled to the highest bidder. One of them named Mellanous, because the sum he had promised the mad king was so huge, he recklessly robbed the Temple of its treasures to pay Antiochus. He even killed the righteous old priest Onias, when the latter threatened to reveal his crime to the people. And so, for years, insanity, corruption, extortion, treachery, idolatry, and murder became the religious expressions best observed at the Temple, initiated, encouraged and practiced by our own fellow Jews, the Hellenists.

People who were following the unfolding events and extreme danger that Hellenism posed to the Torah realized that this had gone far enough and as the revolt against them was set in motion, Antiochus, a staunch ally of the Hellenists became involved in the battles that were to ensue. With the battle cry slogan "There is none like You among the mighty O Lord", the Hasmoneans drove the Syrians out and eradicated the Hellenist evil from the midst of Israel.

Clearly the greater lesson derived from these historical events is that no matter how minor, and how insignificant the foreign influence, let alone major ones, are incorporated in Judaism, sooner or later, we have to pay the consequences for an adulterated Judaism. When we look outside of Judaism for its religious observance, our vision of Judaism become blurred, sending us to obscure unknown directions, whereas it is inside the realms of the Torah and its holy premises that we see constant light. Thus, the Hanukkiah lights serve as a constant reminder of our commitment and loyalty to our traditional ways of life, while at the same time, they inspire and illuminate the path we must follow, the ways of one Torah and of One and only living G-D.

My wife Dorit and children join me in wishing you all a pleasant and happy Hanukah.

Rabbi Shlomo Truzman