



RABBI BARUCH TAUB

RABBI EMERITUS, THE BAYT TORONTO
OU ISRAEL FACULTY

Pardon Me

Currently, there is considerable conversation about the fact that Prime Minister Netanyahu has officially requested a pardon from President Herzog.

The etymology of the word pardon comes from old French, which itself comes from the late Latin word *paronare* meaning to forgive. The Pardon is an act of forgiveness typically granted by a person in authority. However, there is an entirely different usage of the concept Pardon and Pardon Me as defined by the Oxford Dictionary. “Pardon” or “Pardon Me” is a request to a speaker to repeat something because one did not hear it or understand it. In fact this was the first “Pardon Me” that I came into contact with as a young boy. My mother was a wise woman and taught me that if someone was speaking and I spaced out, didn’t understand what they had to say or just wasn’t listening, “ Don’t say what or

what did you say?” Say, “Pardon Me”.

It may be that there are two very different concepts to the meaning of Pardon and Pardon Me. However in reality I believe they converge. **Pardon Me** for not acknowledging your authority and **Pardon Me** for taking for granted what you have to say and for not listening to you. The two Pardon Me’s work in tandem.

So what does this have to do with Hanukkah?

Truth be told there are multiple opportunities for “Pardon Me” moments on Hanukkah. We are referred to in Ma’oz Tzur as Bnei Vinah, people of understanding. There is so much about The Almighty and Hanukkah beneath the surface that we are challenged to uncover. Miraculous messages that may elude us and may require a Pardon Me Moment.

There is for example a unique feature to Hanukkah in contradistinction to all the Yamim Tovim. The original institution of the holiday was to be “Yamim Tovim” with the attendant prohibition of melachah. This was altered by our Rabbis. We do not refer to Hanukkah as Yamim Tovim in Al Hanissim. All of our holidays have mitzvah observances that engage us most of the day. The sukkah and lulav on Sukkot. Matzoh on Pesach are examples. Hanukkah is the only Yom Tov that really has no tangible, constant reminder or observance throughout the eight days. If not for the exception of lightning the Hanukkah candles around half an hour in the evening one might completely miss the message of

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the day. But really that fact actually highlights the essence of the celebration.

Hanukkah is not merely a celebration of the mitzvah of the oil or the miraculous military victory. Hanukkah is about the miracle of a return to *normalcy*. A return to the daily routine of living with Torah, mitzvot and Temple service.

It is clear from the Al Hanissim prayer that **Hanukkah is the Jewish holiday of Thanksgiving** (behalal ubehoda'ah). Saying thank you requires one to be clearly aware of the reason for Thanksgiving.

So "Pardon me" Hakadosh Baruch Hu for not listening carefully. Your love for Am Yisrael has gifted us with an eight day holiday not just about two extraordinary Miracle Moments, but a holiday which highlights the miraculous return to normal Jewish living. Nothing special but everything special.

Requesting a "Pardon" from the Almighty for not appreciating His constant presence. "Pardon Me" for not surrendering to Your love. "Pardon Me" for not listening carefully to the total impact of the *normal* holiday of Hanukkah. Now that is a proper celebration of our Jewish Thanksgiving.

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