



PORTION FROM THE PORTION

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Maoz Zur Yeshuati - Mah Nishtana? Pesach and Chanukah - What's the Connection?

For some time now I have been working on producing a Haggada with pieces that move and pop-up. My "Pop-up Haggada" makes the familiar text more exciting for the kids (6 to 106) who will use it, and will help keep them engaged throughout the long Seder night. There are only a few more things left till it's finished and may even be ready for this Pesach. So it's understandable that I constantly have Pesach on my mind. So what does that have to do with our current holiday of Chanukah?

Well, while preparing this column for Chanukah it hit me that the song "*Maoz Zur Yeshuati*", that we sing after lighting the Chanukah candles isn't only about Chanukah. Actually, only one of the six verses of this *piut* speaks about Chanukah, and the song even includes one whole verse about Pesach. So what is so

special about this song that is sung by families in all communities (except for Teimanim) while standing together around the burning Chanukah candles? Why was this song chosen to be sung at such a special spiritual time?

The first verse of the song is a prayer for the reestablishment of the Beit Hamikdash, our House of Prayer where we can also bring the Toda -the sacrifice for thanksgiving and give thanks to God. Chanukah is a time for giving thanks, and we would like to be able to do that in the Beit Hamikdash.

The next four stanzas recall four exiles that the Jewish people endured and praise God for redeeming us from each one of them. Included in this list are slavery in Egypt, the Babylonian exile, the Purim story and Chanukah itself. The holiday we celebrate today is part of our long history of Hashem being there for us.

The last verse of the song "*Chasof zeroa kodshecha* - Take retribution against the evil nation" is a request for God to take revenge against Israel's enemies (no shortage of those), for that reason it was censored and doesn't appear in some siddurim. Of course, these lines reminded me of the part in the Haggadah when we open the door for Eliyahu and say "*Shefoch Chamatcha al hagoim asher*

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lo Yaducha – Pour out Your wrath upon the nations who do not know You...". We pray to Hashem to punish the goyim for what they have done to the Jews. Revenge against enemies of Israel and of God is important.

So back to our question – why "Maoz Zur Yeshuati" on Chanukah? For one reason, while "al hanisim" that we recite in the *shemona esra* and *birkat hamazon* on Chanukah highlights the miracle of winning the battle, it doesn't mention the miracle of the small flask of oil that lasted 8 days. *Maoz Zur* does just that and talks about the miracle of the oil in line 19 "Uminotar kankanim – from the last remaining flask a miracle was wrought for your beloved ". So that gives some balance.

Another reason the song is so popular is that it connects the story of the miracles of Chanukah into the overall historical system of Hashem's hashgacha over Israel (providence) throughout the generations. Just like God saved us from the Egyptians, and the Babylonians, and Haman He saved us from the Greeks and will continue to save us till Moshiach comes.

Maybe this year a nice family activity while together lighting the Chanukia would be to write a personal family stanza for "Maoz Zur" that poetically and musically gives thanks for the miracles that we all experienced here in Israel this year. Many people feel the events were on a Biblical scale and it is appropriate to sing thanks for them. Channukah Sameach

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The Greeks tried to make us forget the Torah so we had to fight against them, and thanks to God's help, they are no longer a super power that we must contend with. I thought it appropriate to include a recipe for Greek fried patties – a little different kind of

latke. Chanukah Sameach.

GREEK CHICKPEA FRIED PATTIES (REVITHOKEFTEDES) WITH YOGURT DIP

- 450grams / 15 oz home cooked or canned chickpeas, drained
- 1 small onion, chopped finely
- 1 egg
- 1 clove garlic, pressed
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
- 12 tablespoons flour
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- Oil for frying

Blend the chickpeas, olive oil, garlic, and oregano until smooth. Add the remaining ingredients, except the flour. Season with salt and pepper. Mix well. Then gradually stir in the flour one tablespoon at a time. The dough will be sticky. Remove egg-sized portions and form into patties. Heat oil in a frying pan and gently fry the keftedes until well browned on all sides. Drain excess oil on a paper towel. Arrange on a serving dish with lemon wedges, scallions and Greek yogurt dip.

GREEK YOGURT DIP

- 3 tablespoons Greek yogurt
- ½ lime zest & juice
- 3 mint leaves

Mix the Greek yogurt, lime juice and zest in a small bowl. Finely chop the fresh mint leaves and add to the bowl. Season with salt and pepper and whisk until fully combined. ■

 **Mazal Tov to** 
Jake and Helen Weichholz and
family on the marriage of their
granddaughter