



*Zippy
Remembers
When . . .*

Chanukah Then and Now

TZIPPY CLAPMAN

Growing up in our neighborhood of Williamsburg, my childhood memories of Chanukah are mainly my brother and me waiting eagerly for the box of colorful Chanukah candles that Yeshivah Tiferet Yerushalayim would send out each year to raise money. When we received those candles, we knew that Chanukah was coming very soon.

My mother and my brother and I would wait for my father to come home from work each Chanukah evening and we would watch him light his chrome menorah at the window¹; his menorah had two lions for decoration on both sides of the front.

With our candle menorahs and our father's oil menorah lit, we loved singing *Hanairots Halalu* and *Ma'oz Tzur*, and after a dinner of *latkes* and applesauce, we would play *dreidel* for hours into the night. We played for pennies, but that was very exciting; a few pennies could buy something significant in the 1950s.

Five pennies could get us a coloring book, crayons, marbles in a bag and a large candy bar. A large soda was about three pennies, and a *knish* was about ten cents. A huge pickle the size of a hand was a nickel and a box of saltwater taffy that came in a box containing a wrapped toy was also a nickel.

LONELY SURVIVORS

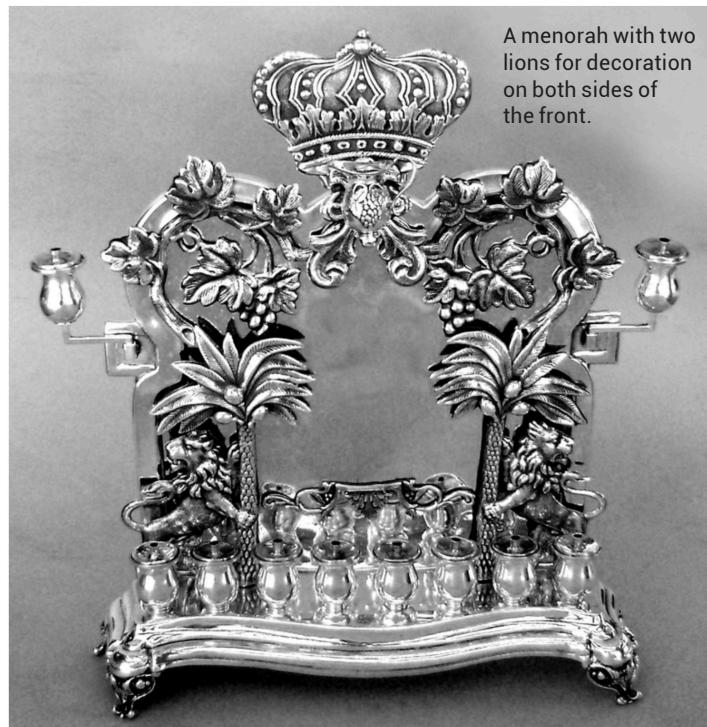
It was sad to see that the newly arrived *chassidim* in Williamsburg in the 1950s were mostly Holocaust survivors, and they did not have many surviving relatives. Most were not so lucky to have an aunt or uncle and some cousins who survived the war. There were very few grandparents who lived through the atrocities of the Holocaust; mostly it was the young and strong (and only very few of those) who survived the concentration camps. The weak, the old, and the very young were exterminated immediately. Hence the lonely lives of many survivors.

Unlike the Holocaust survivors who lived with us in Williamsburg, my brother and I were fortunate to have Bubbies and Zaidies and aunts and uncles. They would all give us Chanukah *gelt*, often as much as a dollar from each relative. Our Chanukah *gelt* amounted to a small fortune by the end of Chanukah, and we felt wealthy. By 1950s standards, we *were* wealthy! We spent a lot of time and energy deciding how to spend our newfound wealth.

People like to complain about "kids nowadays," about how spoiled they are and how into the acquisition of Chanukah *gelt* they are. But on our own (very low) level, we were the same 70 years ago!

THEN AND NOW

At the same time, I do feel that the financial upgrade that we Americans have experienced in the last few decades has led some of us in the wrong direction.



A menorah with two lions for decoration on both sides of the front.

¹ Chabad *minhag* is to light the menorah inside the house, facing a *mezuzah*, and not at the window.

Instead of emphasizing the menorah ceremony, the singing, and the *dreidel* playing (with the understanding that the Chanukah *gelt* is exciting too), we have gotten used to very large financial expectations from children and luxurious trips too.

Baruch Hashem, our dear Rebbe has led us in the right direction, by encouraging us to use our time, energy, and resources to spread the spiritual and physical light of Chanukah to the entire world. We have public menorah lightings in most major shopping malls and other public locations throughout the world, to help Yidden of all backgrounds to feel the miracle of Chanukah and to do its *mitzvah* of menorah.

Our Chabad communities have menorah car parades, and most Chabad Houses make major Chanukah outdoor celebrations, which are posted for many days prior in the local newspapers. Many *shluchim* host concerts, with seating and free refreshments, such as *latkes*, donuts and even hot soup and drinks, with raffles and prizes. These raffle tickets are filled out and therefore the *shluchim* now have their names and telephone numbers in order to do further outreach to bring our Jewish people back to their roots. No Jew will be left behind!

WE HAVE TO DO IT TOO

My husband and I always saw Chanukah as an opportunity to ignite the *neshamos* of our friends and relatives by inviting them to dinner and to our menorah lighting. For some of them, it was their only time experiencing Chanukah.

Who can you invite to your house this Chanukah?

Often we are invited to our children's and friends' homes on Chanukah, and it makes us very happy to experience the warm and loving atmosphere among all the participants at the table.

Believe it or not, we know some very large families who have one night of Chanukah to all come together—just their immediate family—which includes the Bubby and Zaidy and all their children, children-in-law, grandchildren, grandchildren-in-law, and great-grandchildren—a family that is so large (*baruch Hashem*), that they need to rent a small hall or shul just to seat their family all together in



one room! What a blessing from Hashem that is. And the obligation falls on us to remember and invite, especially on Chanukah, those who are not blessed in that beautiful and blessed way.

AND THEN IT'S OVER

I find myself feeling a bit down when we are at our very last menorah lighting on the eighth day, and I know that it will take another year for this exciting and invigorating week to happen again, but I am comforted by all the light that has filled the world this week and I know that light will never fade.

Chanukah is the holiday that lights up the world, with the miracles that Hashem has done for us then and of course for the miraculous wonder of wonders that Hashem is going to do for us now, to bring us out of this dark *galus* very soon! ■

TZIPPY CLAPMAN, RN, MS, FNP, lives in Crown Heights with her husband, Rabbi Yehuda Clapman, a certified sofer. Formerly a NICU nurse and now a provider in family medicine and women's health in Parcare of Boro Park, Tzippy has written extensively for the *N'shei Chabad Newsletter*, always with the goal of convincing parents of the supreme importance of creating warm, happy, Yiddishe memories for their children. Tzippy's sense of humor, her sincerity, and her clarity about Yiddishe values have changed lives for the better in the gentlest way possible. This is the 51st installment of "Tzippy Remembers When..."