

Rabbi's Column

This Shabbat we have an opportunity. Of course, every Shabbat we have the opportunity to relax, recharge, and renew our connection to God's world. This coming Shabbat three things coincide - a Shabbat, Hanukkah and Rosh Hodesh (a new month). Hanukkah always includes the beginning of a new month. Only sometimes does that month begin on Shabbat. When it does, we have a wonderful 3 Torah Scroll morning - 7 portions from the regularly scheduled section of the Torah, one section concerning Rosh Hodesh and another section tangentially connected to Hanukkah. (I say tangentially since Hanukkah is a post-Biblical holiday and there is nothing about it in the TaNaKH. So, since Hanukkah means dedication, we read about the dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness.) As none of these sections are directly next to each other, we take out one Torah Scroll for each topic read about.

The next time this will happen is in April, when a special preparatory segment for Passover occurs on Rosh Hodesh. After that, we would have to wait until next Hanukkah 2019, and then not until Hanukkah 2021. These things come in cycles - sometimes it is years between times, and other times it seems like it happens all the time.

All this pageantry with the 3 Torah Scrolls only happens if there is a minyan (10 Jewish adults) during services on Saturday morning who will have arrived sometime between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m. (Usually at 11 we will be beginning the Torah study we almost always do instead of a Torah reading.) if you do not normally attend on Shabbat morning, but plan to this coming Shabbat, please let me know so I can review the actual Torah Readings for the day. I have done last minute Torah readings, but I prefer to go over the reading the evening before to make sure I remember it properly.

For the generation of the Maccabees themselves, the issue was two-fold. First, the secular foreign rulers were legislating against normative Jewish practice. Second, Jews who were not ritually observant in the same manner they were tried to tell them how to best integrate Greek practices into Jewish ritual at the Temple. Their answer was that Greek practices did not belong in the Temple.

For our generation, the issues are slightly different. We still have Jews trying to tell other Jews the right way to live their lives as Jews (whether ritually, spiritually or politically). I have found that the more one group tries to tell another group how to live Jewishly, the less attention is paid to the group trying to give the orders. (This does cause a small perception problem between groups that are run as a hierarchy and us - they think we pay attention to what "Chief Rabbis" have to say.) Fortunately, in most countries at this time, nobody is trying to legislate Jewish practices out of existence. In some countries, they are.

The miracle of continued Jewish existence is worth talking about, and visions for continued Jewish existence are much worth discussing. The short lived "victory" over the Syrian Greeks is very much less worthy of extended discussion - but it is a great excuse for having a party during the Northern Hemisphere's winter doldrums. I look forward to seeing you at ours this coming Sunday.