

Dvar Torah for Chanukah

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An egg which is round on both ends, or pointy on both ends, is certainly not kosher. An egg which is round on one end and pointy on the other, may be kosher. You have to ask someone trustworthy (Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh Deah 86:1).

Round and pointy refer to two traits for which Jews are known, shame and brazenness, respectively. Too much of either is a sure sign that one will be unsuccessful in neither Torah study nor overall Jewishness. Too much shame, or fear to speak up at the right time, means that one won't seek the information he needs within Torah and will fail to take a stand against those that attempt to limit honest Jewishness.

Being too pointy, always impudent, is also not kosher. While arguments for the sake of Heaven do exist (Avot 5:20), being constantly confrontational indicates that one is more

interested in victory than in truth (see Likutey Moharan I, Lesson #75). Not a good game plan for being attached to the Creator.

Yet exercising a proper measure of shame and brazenness is not a guarantee of being kosher. Each of these traits can be misplaced. For example, one might feel too meek or ashamed to tell the Greek oppressors that he won't accept the restrictions they're placing on the exercise of Jewish practice. And he may feel supremely confident in shushing those Maccabees who are shouting, "Anyone for God—with me!"

Chanukah is related to the word ChiNuKh (education, training). With Chanukah, we begin again to become Jewish, to train ourselves (and perhaps others as well) to properly exercise those traits which will get us through the challenges that we will eventually face. The Chashmonaim (aka Hasmoneans) modeled the successful use of shame and brazenness. They stood up to the Greeks because they were ashamed to face their Creator, and their ancestors, devoid of the essentials of Judaism and having failed to defend God's honor.

God, please help us to properly exercise our shame and brazenness, at the right time and the right place, to the right degree. Amen.

afreilekhen Chanukah!

Chanukah sameach!

(Based on Likutey Halakhot, Beitzim 4:1)