

## Chapter 2

16 It is also one's duty to distribute charity to the poor on Purim day, "the poor" meaning not fewer than two persons; each should be given a separate gift—money, a cooked dish, or some other comestible. For when Scripture says, "and gifts to the poor" (Esther 9:22), it implies at least two gifts to two poor persons. No investigation should be made of applicants for such Purim money, rather it should be given to anyone who stretched out his hand. Nor may Purim money be diverted to any other charitable purpose.

17 It is preferable to spend more on gifts to the poor than on the Purim meal or on presents to friends. For no joy is greater or more glorious than the joy of gladdening the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the strangers. Indeed, he who causes the hearts of these unfortunates to rejoice, emulates the Divine Presence, of whom Scripture says, "to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Is. 57:15).

## Chapter 3

1 In the time of the Second Temple, when the Greeks ruled over Israel, they issued evil decrees against them, proscribing their religion and forbidding them to study the Law and to fulfill the commandments. They laid hands on their property and on their daughters, and they entered the Temple and made breaches in it, and defiled that which was ritually pure. And Israel was in sore straits in consequence thereof, and suffered great persecution, until the God of our fathers took pity on them, and saved and delivered them from the hands of the Greeks. For the Hasmonean family of high priests won a victory in which they slew the Greeks, and saved Israel from their hands. They set up a king from among the priests, and restored Israel's kingdom for a period of more than two hundred years—until the destruction of the Second Temple.

2 The day on which the Israelites were victorious over their enemies and destroyed them was the twenty-fifth day of Kislev. When they re-entered the Temple, they found within its precincts only one cruse of ritually pure oil, enough to burn for but a single day. Yet they kept alight with it the required number of lamps for eight days, until they could press some olives and produce new ritually pure oil.

3 Consequently, the sages of that generation ruled that the eight days beginning with the twenty-fifth of Kislev should be days of rejoicing on which the *Hallel* is to be recited, and that on each one of the eight nights lamps should be lit eventide over the doors of the houses, to serve as manifestation and revelation of the miracle.

These days are known as Hanukkah. Funeral eulogies and fasting are forbidden on them, just as they are on Purim, and the lighting of lamps on them is a commandment based on the authority of the scribes, analogous to the commandment to read the *Megillah*.

#### **Chapter 4**

12 The commandment to light the Hanukkah lamp is an exceedingly precious one, and one should be particularly careful to fulfill it, in order to make known the miracle, and to offer additional praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonders which He has wrought for us. Even if one has no food to eat except what he receives from charity, he should beg—or sell his garment to buy—oil and lamps, and light them.

13 If one has no more than a single penny and needs wine for the sanctification benediction of the Sabbath and oil to light the Hanukkah lamp, he should give preference to the purchase of oil for the Hanukkah lamp over the purchase of wine for the sanctification benediction. Since both commandments are based on the authority of the scribes, it is best to give preference to the Hanukkah lamp, since it serves as a memorial of the miracle of Hanukkah.

14 If such a poor man needs oil for both a Sabbath lamp and a Hanukkah lamp, or oil for a Sabbath lamp and wine for the sanctification benediction, the Sabbath lamp should have priority, for the sake of peace in the household, seeing that even a Divine Name might be erased to make peace between husband and wife. Great indeed is peace, forasmuch as the purpose for which the whole of the Law was given is to bring peace upon the world, as it is said, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Prov. 3:17).