

Meal Mandate

Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by Dayan Yehoshua Grunwald

December 2, 2021

https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/BER82_010_Mikeitz_Happy_Chanukah_Are_Chanuka_Seudos_a-Chiyuv_or_Minhag.mp3

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 670:2) writes that a meal eaten on Chanukah is not a *seudas mitzvah*. The Rama cites a *yeish omrim* (“some say”) that although there is no obligation, a *seudah* eaten on Chanukah is “*ketzas mitzvah*” (something of a mitzvah) due to the dedication of the *mizbeiach* that took place during this period. The Rama cites a third view that the custom is to sing songs and recite praises of Hashem at Chanukah meals, and this transforms them into *seudos mitzvah*. This approach is the accepted halacha.

The Binyan Shlomo suggests that the Rambam has a different perspective, as the Rambam writes that Chanukah is “days of joy,” which the Binyan Shlomo interprets to mean that one must drink wine and eat meat on Chanukah. But he does not understand why neither the Shulchan Aruch nor the Rama cites this view.

Perhaps the answer is that the Rambam can be understood differently. The Maharshal (Yam shel Shlomo, Bava Kama 7:37) suggests that the Rambam calls Chanukah *yemei simcha* because one who makes a special meal on Chanukah transforms it into a *seudas mitzvah*, even if it is not obligatory. He proves this from the implication of the Gemara (Bava Kama 80a) that the ceremony of “*yeshua habein*” (possibly the *shalom zachar*; see Tosafos) is a *seudas mitzvah*. The Maharshal argues that if such a meal can be considered a *seudas mitzvah*, then certainly one in honor of Chanukah is a *seudas mitzvah*, though not obligatory. Thus the opinion of the Rambam is essentially the first approach of the Rama.

According to the Brisker Rav (cited in Kuntres Chanukah Umegilah), the Rambam means by “*yemei simcha*” that it is forbidden to fast and eulogize on Chanukah. According to the Rash of Ostreich (quoted in the Bach), the Rambam agrees with Rabbeinu Yo’el that a *seudah* with bread on Chanukah is in fact obligatory (and therefore one would repeat *birkas hamazon* if he forgot *al hanisim*).