

## **Texts about Hanukkah and Sustainability**

1

### **The Menorah is a Tree**

Note: The Menorah that stood in the Temple in Jerusalem was clearly meant to resemble a tree:

“You shall make a menorah of pure gold; the menorah shall be made of hammered work; its base and its shaft, its cups, calyxes, and petals shall be of one piece. Six branches shall issue from its sides; three branches from one side of the menorah and three branches from the other side of the menorah. On one branch there shall be three cups shaped like almond-blossoms, each with calyx and petals, and on the next branch there shall be three cups shaped like almond-blossoms, each with calyx and petals; so for all six branches issuing from the menorah. And on the menorah itself there shall be four cups shaped like almond-blossoms, each with calyx and petals: a calyx, of one piece with it, under a pair of branches; and a calyx, of one piece with it, under the second pair of branches, and a calyx, of one piece with it, under the last pair of branches; so for all six branches issuing from the menorah. Their calyxes and their stems shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it a single hammered piece of pure gold.” Shemot/Exodus 25:31-40 (A parallel to this passage appears in Shemot/Exodus 37:17-24, describing how Bezalel follows these directions exactly).

2

### **The Menorah is Fed Directly from Live Olive Trees**

Note: On the Shabbat during Hanukkah, we read the vision of the prophet Zechariah for the haftarah:

[The angel] said to me, “What do you see?” And I answered, “I see a menorah all of gold, with a bowl above it. The lamps on it are seven in number, and the lamps above it have seven pipes, and the lamps above it have seven pipes; and next to it are two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and one on its left. ...” And what,” I asked him, “are those two olive trees, one on the right and one on the left of the menorah?” And I further asked him, “What are the two tops of the olive trees that feed their gold [JPS note: can be read as “oil”] through those two golden tubes?” (Zechariah 4:2-3)

### **Hanukkah as Festival of Doing More with Less**

Mai Hanukkah/What is Hanukkah? Our sages taught: For the idolaters entered the Sanctuary and defiled all the oils in the Sanctuary; and when the power of the Hasmoneans overcame and defeated them, they searched, but found no more than one flask of oil, sealed with the seal of the high Priest, and there was not enough oil in it to last more than one day. But a miracle took place, and they kindled with it for eight days. (Shabbat 21b)

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A question posed by the Beit Yosef: The only oil valid for lighting the menorah in the Temple was olive oil, that is, oil squeezed from olives that grew on an olive tree. This being so, how could they fulfill the obligation of lighting the menorah with miraculous oil, which did not come from olive trees but was produced by a miracle?

Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk answered: We must conclude that the miracle did not cause the quantity of the oil to increase; no new oil came into being. What happened was that the quality of the olive oil changed miraculously, so that the original olive oil became more potent and burned more efficiently, allowing the one-day supply to burn eight days. Thus, although initially they poured the entire contents of the jar into the lamps of the menorah, each night only one-eighth of the oil was consumed. Consequently, the same miracle occurred on the first day as on each of the following days.

### **Zechariah a Supporter of Wind Energy?**

This is the word of the Divine to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit (b'ruchi) – said the Divine. (Zechariah 4:6) Note: Ruach can also be translated as wind.