



בימים ההם בזמן הזה

Living with the times

First night of Chanukah

קושיית הבית יוסף

Question of the Beis Yosef

Since the flask oil that was found would have naturally burned for one of the days, the miraculous component of the oil burning was only for the remaining seven days. If so, why was the festival of Chanukah established for 8 days?

This is known as קושיית הבית יוסף - the Question of the Beis Yosef. It is named after Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the Shulchan Oruch, who raises this question in his work; the Beis Yosef.

An answer from the Taz

When the destitute widow of the prophet Ovadiah called out for assistance from the Novi Elisha, Elisha asked her, "What do you have in the house?" The widow replied that all she had was a small jug of oil. Elisha then instructed her to borrow empty vessels and to pour into them from the jug. The oil miraculously poured until there were no more vessels available for use.

The Zohar asks: If Hashem was willing to perform a miracle, what was the difference which possessions she had at home?

From here we learn that rather than performing miracles to create a new existence, Hashem sends a Brocha to increase something that already exists.

This answers the Beis Yosef's question. There had to have been some oil left over from the first night in order for the miracle to take effect on the subsequent nights. The fact that all the oil did not burn out on the first night was a miracle.

A collection of short Chanukah Divrei Torah to share with your family when sitting by the Chanukah candles

~ Prepared for you by the Kollel ~

A Vort: Chanukah Inspiration

The Talmud lists four people who are obligated to say the blessing of thanksgiving known as *Hagomel*: One who travelled across the sea, one who travelled across a desert, one who recovered from illness and someone who is released from captivity.

Each of these individuals found themselves in a situation of danger and must publicly thank Hashem for their survival. Some of the classic commentators connect these four groups of people to the four exiles experienced by the Jewish people: the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman exiles.

The Greek exile in which the Chanukah story took place is like the person who was sick and recovered. The other three categories are people who found themselves away from home, with danger or threat brought upon them by their environment (sea, desert or prison). Someone in that situation would be quite aware of the danger. The one who is sick

however may be in the comfort of their own home. Unlike the other groups, the threat to his life comes from within and may go unnoticed and untreated for a long time.

During the Greek exile, the Jewish people found themselves 'at home' in the land of Israel. The threat was not external physical captivity or oppression (as in the other exiles). Under Greek influence, hellenisation was an internal spiritual illness, which affected the Jewish people from within.

The severity of this illness went untreated and affected the majority of the Jewish people, until finally the *Chashmonaim*, realising the danger facing the Jewish people took action. Their rallying of the people to return to the path of Torah was perhaps the greatest miracle of Chanukah and the reason why the sages instituted this festival for the express purpose of giving thanks for our recovery.

Halocha: Laws and Customs

The Gemora teaches that there are three levels at which a person can fulfill the Mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles. The most basic Mitzvah is to light one candle each night in the home. Mehadrin, those who wish to fulfill the Mitzvah in a preferable manner, should light one candle each night for each person in the home.

Mehadrin min Hamehadrin, the most ideal way to light Chanukah candles is subject to a debate. Beis sham-mai rule that we should light eight candles on the first night and decrease each night by one candle. Beis Hillel on the other hand rule that we should ascend in holiness by lighting one candle on the first night and increasing each night. Lighting in this manner magnifies the *pirsumei nissa*, the publicizing of the miracle since it shows the increasing nature of the miracle with each passing day.

It is accepted practice that all Jews light the Menorah in the unique manner of Mehadrin min Hamehadrin. The Shulchan Oruch does not even discuss the other modes of lighting. However, Sefardim and Ashkenazim have different opinions on how one lights in a way of Mehadrin min Hamehadrin. The Sefardim follow the ruling of the Mechaber, Rabbi Yosef Karo, who says that only one Menora is to be lit per household. This follows the view of Tosfos who was concerned that if we lit candles for each person in the home, it would just look like a collection of candles and this would not clearly show or mark the passing nights of Chanukah.

Ashkenazim follow the ruling of the Ram"o, Rabbi Moshe Isserles, who holds that Mehadrin min Hamehadrin is an extension of the Mehadrin method, and therefore each person in the household should light their own Menorah. To take care of Tosfos' problem, the Ram"o requires each set of candles to be lit in a distinct place. Using separate Menoras would also suffice.

The Taz points out an interesting fact: In this halocha, the Sefardic ruling follows the opinion of the Baalei Tosfos who were Ashkenazim, whereas the Ashkenazi custom follows the ruling of the Rambam who was Sefardi. Either way, the power of Chanukah is that it is the only Mitzvah we all do Mehadrin min Hamehadrin!

For Divrei Torah for the remaining days of Chanukah visit
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