



בימים ההם בזמן הזה

Living with the times

Third 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 Maharil

Even though the oil burning for 1 of the 8 days should be considered a natural event rather than a miracle, the sages wanted to teach us the following lesson; Miracles are not exclusively supernatural events. The natural order of the world and everything that takes place in it is also a miracle.

Rav Moshe Feinstein brings a basis to this from a story in the Gemora: Once the daughter of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa mistakenly poured vinegar instead of oil into the Shabbos candles. Rabbi Chanina famously told his daughter not to worry, as "The same G-d that told oil to burn, can tell vinegar to burn." Indeed, that week the candles burned the entire Shabbos.

The burning of oil is no less miraculous than the burning of vinegar.

The only difference is how frequently they occur.

To remind us that Hashem dictates nature just as he causes miracles, the Chachamim established eight days of Chanukah instead of seven.



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

A Vort: Chanukah Inspiration

The Gemora teaches that the Chanukah candles should be placed by one's doorway, on the outside of the house. However, in times of danger, the candles are kindled inside one's house on the table.

The traditional commentators explain that ideally one should light candles in view of the public domain to publicise the miracles that Hashem did for us. There was however a period of time when it was considered dangerous to light candles in public view, since this would lead to attacks from a local tribe who forbade lighting candles outside of their houses of Avodah Zarah. In such times, the candles may be lit indoors, publicising the miracle to the residents within the house instead. Jews outside of Eretz Yisroel rely on this ruling to light indoors even when there is no longer a present danger.

One of the Chassidic masters reinterprets this halocha to teach a powerful message: In former

times, Jewish homes and communities were filled with the warmth and light of Torah and Kedusha, safe, distinct and unaffected by the darkness and depravity of the street. In these times, we were able to focus our energies on illuminating the outside with the light of Torah.

Now however, the darkness which was once confined to the street has entered the once-immune homes. Secular values, fashions, technologies and influences anti-thetical to Torah have found their way into our very own homes and sadly some of our youth struggle to remain 'on the derech'.

When faced with this 'time of danger', we need to bring the light and message of the Chanukah candles into our homes. To focus on filling our homes with warmth and light of vibrant Yiddishkeit and dispelling any darkness 'Hellenistic' forces which may find themselves inside.

Halocha: Laws and Customs

In addition to lighting the Menora at home, the Shulchan Oruch rules that Chanukah candles should also be lit in the Shule between Mincha and Maariv. Many questioned this practice, especially since no one is Yotzai with this lighting and as such it would be a *brocha levatala*. The Rivash (14th Century Spain) writes that this is an ancient custom and is for the purpose of *Pirumei Nissa* - publicising the miracle.

The Menora-lighting in Shule, the *Mikdash Me'at*, is to commemorate the miracle of the Menora in the Beis Hamikdash. Therefore, just as the Menora stood on the South wall of the Kodosh, we place the Menora in Shule along the Southern wall, irrespective of whether there is a doorway or not. The Ram"o writes that the Menora in Shule should be positioned from East to West. The Magen Avraham writes that there are communities who align the Menora North-South. The different customs is based on a dispute in the Gemora and between the Rishonim concerning how the Menora in the Beis Hamikdash actually faced.

There are many Poskim who rule that a brocha may only be made in Shule when there is a minyan present to fulfill *Pirumei Nissa*. Women, and according to some Poskim even children, can be included in the 10 required to be able to make a brocha, since they also fulfill the requirement of *Pirumei Nissa*.

The lighting in Shule, which serves purely for *Pirumei Nissa*, is used as the basis for the public Menora lightings which the Rebbe has encouraged to increase awareness of Chanukah. Whilst there are halachic authorities who do not extend this halocha to outside of the Shule, practice is to light with a brocha when at least 10 people are present. Aside from the public-lightings, we make sure to go on Mivztoim to light with Jewish families in their homes, where they are certainly Yotzai the Mitzvah.

