



בימים ההם בזמן הזה

Living with the times

Fourth night of Chanukah



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

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.

More Answers

In the version of the Chanukah story as recorded in the *Sheiltos* of Rabbi Acha Gaon, the text reads that the flask that was found contained not even enough oil to burn for one day. The fact that it nonetheless burned for the entire first day was a separate miracle.

Since the Temple Menora had been made impure by the Yevanim, a new Menorah had to be constructed. Since the new lamps of this Menorah were not saturated with oil from prior use, they would absorb some of the oil that was poured in when the Menora was first used, reducing the amount of oil that would be available to be burned.

The miracle of the first day was that despite losing some of its volume, the oil still burned for the regular duration without being affected.

A Vort: Chanukah Inspiration

Throughout the festival of Chanukah we light a total of 36 Mitzvah candles (excluding the Shammash), starting with one candle on the first night and building up to eight on the final night.

The Sefer Rokeach explains that these 36 candles correspond to the 36 hours during which Adam was able to bask in the radiance of the great light that was created on the first day of Creation. The greatness of this light was not a physical quality but rather a spiritual one. The sources explain that with this light one was capable of seeing from one end of the world to the other. Adam was created at dawn on the 6th day and was expelled from the Garden of Eden on *Motzai Shabbos*, 36 hours later. After this Hashem concealed this great light, storing it away for the righteous in the World to Come.

The holiness of the Chanukah candles embody a foretaste of this Divine illumination which we will experience openly in the times of Moshiach.

The Sefer Taamei Minhagim also explains the sym-

bolism of the number 36. Of the 63 tractates of the Mishna, 36 have been elucidated by discussions in the Talmud Bavli. Torah itself is referred to in the book of Proverbs as 'light'. The Greeks tried to repress the study of Torah. Therefore the miraculous victory of Chanukah which reaffirmed our commitment and adherence to Torah, is celebrated with light, with the 36 Mesechtos of the Talmud.

The two above explanations are interrelated. The word *Or* (light) in the Torah's account of the first day of creation appears 5 times. The Baal HaTurim explains that this corresponds to the 5 books of the Torah. Hashem hid the mystical light of the first day of creation within the teachings of the Torah. Through Torah study (especially Torah sheBaal Peh) and through the lighting of the Chanukah Menorah we can connect to this infinite light and the spiritual warmth and illumination that it provides.

Indeed, the Rebbe suggests that we should use the time that we sit next to the Chanukah candles to learn Torah, specifically Talmud.

Halocha: Laws and Customs

Usually, preference is given to the right side when fulfilling Mitzvos, since the right side is considered more honourable. However, the Chanukah Menorah is lit at the doorway on the left side as one enters, since the Mezuzah already stands on the right side. We are then surrounded by the fulfillment of Mitzvos in both directions. The Ben Ish Chai points out that the one lighting the candles, while wearing Tzitzis, is surrounded by the Mezuzah and Chanukah candles. The first letters of the words **Tzitzis**, **Mezuzah** and **Chanukah** spell the word Tzemach, a name associated with Moshiach.

If one lights Menorah in place where there is no Mezuzah, for example in a hotel, some Poskim write that the Menorah should be changed to the right side of the doorway so as to give honour to the Mitzvah by associating it with the right side. Other opinions say that we should not make any distinctions.

Kabistically, the right and the left sides represent the realms of holiness and impurity respectively. Most Mitzvos are performed on the right side, with the objective of increasing the strength of holiness in this world. This is the service of the Tzaddik (The righteous). The Chanukah candles on the other hand seek to illuminate the darkness and spiritual void of the outside world, therefore they are kindled on the left side – the service of the Baal Teshuvah (penitent). Really, both Mitzvos are on the right side; only that the Mezuzah is on the right side of one *entering* the house, the realm of holiness. The Chanukah candles stand on the right side of one *leaving* the home towards the street, to illuminate the world with their light.

