



# בימים ההם בזמן הזה

## Living with the times

Seventh 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.

#### An answer from the Rebbe

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, after bringing and refuting several answers to the Beis Yosef's question, answers as follows:

The ultimate miracle is the merging of the divine and the natural; that physicality itself is elevated to function on a level higher than the mundane. The miracle of the oil was that the physical oil burned but simultaneously it did not become consumed (similar to the burning bush which Moshe witnessed).

A similar miracle occurred constantly in the Holy of Holies, that the Aron Ark (which had finite, halachically required dimensions yet did not take up any physical space, yet at the same time would only be considered fit.

Similarly, during the eight days of Chanukah the oil burned naturally but did not become consumed; a miracle on every day.

## Halocha: Laws and Customs

The Talmud's discussion on the laws of Chanukah is found in the second perek of Mesechta Shabbos. This chapter, *Bameh Madlikin*, discusses the types of oils and wicks one may use for lighting Shabbos candles. On Shabbos we may only use certain types of oils, those which burn steadily. The wicks must be of a material that draw the oil up to the flame in a constant stream. Wicks and oils that burn inconsistently or flicker cannot be used. The Chachamim were worried that a person using these types of candles to read or do other activities by their light, may come to tilt the lamp to ensure that it burns more brightly. This would constitute the Melacha of Maavir, kindling a flame - a biblical violation of Shabbos.

The Talmud then questions whether the same restrictions apply to the materials we may use for Chanukah candles, specifically on Shabbos (although there is an opinion that even during the week inferior wicks and oils should not be used for Chanukah light - the concern according to this opinion is that the candles may go out and then won't be rekindled). The conclusion is that we may use any oils or wicks, even those of inferior quality and even on the Shabbos of Chanukah. The rationale of the Halocha is as follows; If the candles become extinguished one is not obliged to relight them (some opinions limit this leniency only to where the candles were not deliberately extinguished). Therefore inferior oils may be used because we are unconcerned that the candles may go out. Similarly on Shabbos we are not concerned that someone may tilt the Chanukah candles to cause them to burn more brightly, since one is forbidden to have any benefit from the Chanukah candles. The exception to this is the Shamash since one is allowed to benefit from its light.

## A Vort: Chanukah Inspiration

The Sfas Emes explains the above Halocha in its esoteric context. The candle represents the Neshama, the Jewish soul - as King Solomon taught; *Ner Hashem Nishmas Adam*. One of the names by which the soul is referred to is Nefesh. The word Nefesh comprises three letters which form an acronym; **Ner** (candle) **Pesilah** (wick) **Shemen** (oil).

Like a candle, the soul is supposed to be kindled and burn with the flames of love for Hashem. Just as the flames on a candle flicker upwards, so too the soul longs to cleave to its Divine source.

There are different types of candles that vary in their wicks and oils, and the quality of how they burn. So too the souls in this world vary in how conducive they are to be ignited and burning with the flames of *Ahavas Hashem*.

A soul that has become submerged in the pursuit of physical delights and materialism, is more difficult to be kindled with a spiritual sensitivity and appreciation of *Kedusha*. A soul which is not involved in

learning Torah and Avodas HaTefillah struggles to arouse the desire to transcend the limitations of the world and burn with passion.

The Divine revelations on each of the holy days of our calendar have the ability to arouse, inspire and uplift the *Neshama*. On Shabbos, says the Sfas Emes, the halocha is that only certain candles may be utilized. Shabbos was given to the spiritually enlightened generation who left Mitzrayim. To connect one's soul to be inspired by the holiness of Shabbos is not easily attainable by everyone.

On Chanukah however, all types of candles may be used. The miracle of Chanukah took place at a time when most Jews were hellenised. Yet the impact of this miracle restored the hearts of the people to the service of Hashem. The power of Chanukah is that its light illuminates even the darkest and most unholy of places and ignites the flames of love within even the most distant and weakest of souls to reconnect with their source.

