

The Answer to the Answers

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With Chanukah fast approaching, we would be remiss if we didn't mention one of the most famous questions ever posed in the history of the Jewish people.

The miracle of Chanukah took place during the days of the second Beis Hamikdash. When the Jews recaptured the Beis Hamikdash they began to look for oil with which to light the Menorah. They needed pure oil with the seal of the Kohen Gadol. After a massive search, they uncovered one tiny sealed flask of oil that was hidden away. Their joy was quickly tempered when they realized that there was only enough oil to last for one day. It was necessary to have enough oil for eight days to give them enough time to process new oil. Miraculously, the oil that physically should have lasted only one day, sufficed for eight. This is why we celebrate Chanukah for eight days.

The Beis Yosef asks, why do we commemorate the miracle of Chanukah for eight days? The oil was naturally supposed to last for one day, meaning the miracle was only seven days long-not eight?

There are literally hundreds of different answers to this question. In fact, there is an entire sefer dedicated exclusively to this question and its answers.

The Beis Yosef himself offers three answers to this question:

1. When they found the oil, those preparing the Menorah split the oil into eight small parts for each of the subsequent eight days. Thus there was a miracle every day as that tiny amount of oil lasted the entire day.

2. After they filled the Menorah on the first day, miraculously the flask remained filled with oil. This repeated itself every day. Hence, there was a miracle on each of the eight days.

3. After the first day they checked the Menorah and it was still filled with oil, even though it had already been lit for the entire day. This miracle occurred each of the eight days. Therefore we celebrate eight days, for even on the first day the menorah was lit the oil was not consumed.

It always nagged me, why specifically by Chanukah do we have one question that has elicited so many answers and original ideas? It is difficult to find another question similar to this in the vast ocean of Torah literature.

My colleague, R' Naphtali Buchwald, once related to me a very unique answer to this question that he heard from Rav Mordechai Druk zt"l, the renowned maggid from Yerushalayim.

“Miraculously the flask remained filled with oil”

The Yevanim, the Greeks, attempted to take the Torah away from the Jews. They didn't try to physically kill us, rather they attempted to spiritually annihilate us. They wanted to separate us from all Torah and mitzvos. Fortunately, they were unsuccessful and the Jewish nation was victorious.

Rabbi Druk explained that there is no greater retribution to the Yevanim than to learn more and more Torah. There is no greater sign of victory than to flaunt our Torah muscles. The amount of Torah that was produced to answer this one question of the Beis Yosef can fill volumes. It is no coincidence that this quandary that has produced so much Torah is based on the miracle of Chanukah. The fact that there are so many answers to this famous question of the Beis Yosef, is the greatest sign of triumph over the Yevanim! The Yevanim tried to purge the Jews of Torah yet all they accomplished was the production of even more Torah.

We see this pendulum swinging throughout our history. My grandparents, R' Yehuda and Chana Friedman zt'l were Holocaust survivors. They suffered years of unimaginable hardship and loss in the concentration camps. Hitler ym"s tried to quash their yiddeshe neshamos and their future. B'chasdei Hashem my grandparents survived the inferno and went on to build a strong family, something they could hardly dream of during the years of suffering.

My grandparents used to say that they had wished they can show Hitler the growth of their family, and the resurrection of post Holocaust Jewry. They would have loved to have given him a tour of the hundreds of flourishing yeshivos and kollelim. If only they could have shown

him their children and grandchildren learning in Yeshiva. Imagine if they had shown him the tens of thousands of tinokos shel beis rabban who will be transmitting our great mesora to their children.

My grandparents knew that if Hitler would see all of this, he would realize that he was an abysmal failure in his ultimate mission of destroying the soul of the Jewish nation. The Nazi's were unsuccessful just like the Yevanim and so many others who have tried to extinguish the flame of Torah and yiddishkeit.

This Chanukah, we are fortunate to have the ability to show the strength of Am Yisroel by reinforcing our commitment to learning Torah and transmitting it to our children. By doing this we are joining with millions of our ancestors who were moser nefesh for yiddishkeit and Torah. We are ensuring our future, and we are guaranteeing that our enemies will ultimately fail in their venomous mission. ♦

Good Shabbos and A Freilechen Chanukah!