

Chanukah 2017

1.

**We solely mention the victory of the war in על הנסים. Conversely, the Gemara in Shabbos (21b) only relates the oil miracle. Why?**

**Rav Baruch Epstein** (Baruch Shamar pages 144-146) quotes the Mishna in Avos (perek hay) which relates ten daily miracles that happened in the Beis Hamikdash. The Gemara in Yuma (21a) relates that even more miracles occurred daily in the Beis Hamikdash. The question arises; why didn't the Mishna in Avos relate these other daily miracles? The Mishna only related the miracles whose benefit/purpose is noticeable, tangible and revealed.

In על הנסים only the miracle of the war is mentioned because the impact was clearly noticeable to the world. The oil however, was only known by a few individuals who were in the Beis Hamikdash. Therefore, **there is no obligation to give thanks in על הנסים for the oil miracle because it was only noticeable by a few individuals.**

The war is not mentioned in the Gemara for several reasons. **The victory didn't necessarily demonstrate how much Hashem loved us because it is Hashem's way to protect those who are being chased.** As the pasuk in Koheles (3) says Hashem protects those being chased. The Medrash Raba explains that even if a tzaddik is chasing a rasha, Hashem will help the rasha. Since the Greeks were chasing the Jews, Hashem would surely help. **However, the oil miracle revealed the divine intervention Hashem had for the Jews. No flask remained with the seal of the Kohen Gadol except for this one. The material in the Gemara was thought to those who were learning in Yeshiva. Therefore, the oil miracle was taught to these individuals specifically which shows how much Hashem loves us! This love is specifically recognizable from the oil miracle, not the war miracle. Everyone, not just those learning in the Yeshiva say על הנסים when davening and benching. The general population didn't necessarily understand the importance of the oil miracle, as it was a small miracle which was only witnessed by a few people who were in the Beis Hamikdash. Therefore, only the war, the apparent salvation is mentioned in על הנסים.** (This shtims with what Rav Pam says (Atara L'melech pages 189-190): The holiday of Chanukah and its mitzvos was enacted because of the miracle of finding a pure jug of oil with the seal of the Kohan Gadol. Therefore, every night of Chanukah we recite the beracha of 'Who made miracles for our forefathers in those days at this season' 'שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה'.

The question arises; **why is this miracle so important? Meaning, what is the significance and importance of this miracle that occurred? The Mishna in Avos (perek hay) relates every single day there were ten miracles that occurred in the Beis Hamikdash. What is so significant about the miracle of Chanukah that it deserves its own holiday?**

Rav Pam explains by asking another question. The Pnei Yehoshua (on the Gemara in Shabbos on 21b) asks **why we needed the miracle of Chanukah oil at all. The Gemara in Yuma relates that if everyone is impure it is permitted to light impure oil (טומאה הותרה בציבור)!?**

**The Pnei Yehoshua says that true, we didn't need the miracle. However, Hashem wanted to show us how much he loves us, so He caused a miracle.**

Rav Pam offers a mashal of a quarrel between a husband and a wife. Due to the help of a third party they made peace. However, sometimes there can still be an indirect resentment amongst them due to strong harsh words that were uttered. Even after peace was made between them, at certain times words can never be taken back. Even after an apology, if very hurtful words were uttered, they will never be forgotten. Sometimes it is too late once those negative comments

come out of one's mouth. The level of love and tranquility that this couple once possessed perhaps might never be attained again. The relationship between us and Hashem differs in this regard. Once we repent, Hashem considers as if we never sinned! This is the chiddush (insight) of the Chanukah miracle. **The oil miracle alludes to Hashem's acceptance of our repentance.** Even though we sinned, it's always possible to return. **Hashem demonstrated His acceptance by performing an unnecessary miracle.** The other ten daily miracles that occurred were all necessary miracles. The Chanukah miracle showed Hashem's love for us and His complete forgiveness. Perhaps the general population didn't understand how unnecessary this miracle was because they didn't know that if everyone is impure it is permitted to light impure oil. This is why the oil miracle was taught to those who were learning Gemara.)

Another answer is as follows. It says in על הנסים that the target of Yavan was to cause the Jews to forget the Torah. The Gemara in Berachos (56a) says someone who sees olive oil in a dream should anticipate Torah wisdom. Furthermore, the Gemara in Menachos (85b) says since they were accustomed to olive oil, wisdom will be found amongst them. The Gemara in Horeyos (13b) says someone who is regular with oil will remember the learning he forgot. What's the correlation between oil and Torah wisdom? The Menorah and oil were kept near the Luchos in the Ohel Moed. The Luchos are the foundation of the Torah. **Therefore, the Yeshiva students who learn Gemara were specifically taught about the oil miracle because of the connection between the Torah and oil. However, it is difficult for the general population to understand this connection! Therefore, only the war is mentioned in על הנסים because everyone can understand this.**

Another answer is as follows. **The Gemara didn't mention the war in order that people wouldn't claim that the Jews only survived because of their own military might.** The pasuk in Zechariah (4, 6) says "not through army and not through strength, but through My spirit, said Hashem." The bracha in parshas Toldos that says you'll live by the sword was told to Esav, not to us. Dovid wasn't allowed to build the Beis Hamikdash because he fought in wars. It is for this reason that the Gemara doesn't mention the war. The emphasis isn't the war. It's all from Hashem!

2.

In Kuntros Yemei Chanukah, Rav Karelstein (siman beis) quotes the Beis Yosef's question (siman 670) why is Chanukah eight days, when there was enough oil to last one day as stated in mesechas Shabbos (21b)?

The Alter Mi'Kelm agrees that on the first day there wasn't a miracle. However, **there are eight days in order to teach us that nature is also a miracle!** We can further elaborate by quoting the Ramban (end of parsha Bo) who asks why Hashem causes supernatural miracles to occur. He explains that supernatural miracles happen in order to show us that really everything is a miracle. Our ability, to breathe, eat walk, text, listen, etc. are really all miracles! One only has a portion in Torah when he believes there is no such thing as nature. Chanukah is therefore eight days in order to emphasize that nature is also a miracle. The Gemara in Taanis (25a) says just as Hashem can cause oil to light, so too, he can cause vinegar to light.

Rabbi Shmuel Rozovsky explains why we say בני בינה ימי שמונה קבעו שיר ורננים – men of insight – eight days they established for song and jubilation in Maoz Tzur. Why here are we called men of insight (בני בינה)? Rashi (beginning of parshas Tetzaveh) says בני בינה refers to those who understanding one thing from another (Chagiga 14a). **We are called בני בינה because we extrapolated from the oil miracle that even nature is a miracle!**

We can give an additional answer based on a Maharal (Shabbas 21b). Why did chazal establish the holiday of Chanukah just because of a miracle that occurred which enabled us to do one mitzvah? Other holidays weren't enacted because of a miracle that occurred. The oil miracle isn't even mentioned in על הנסים. What is special about the oil miracle? The Maharal explains that Chanukah was established because we prevailed against the Greeks. However, this victory didn't really look like a miracle from Hashem. Therefore, Hashem caused the miracle of the oil to show that the military victory was a miracle as well. According to this, the reason why Chanukah was enacted was because we learn one thing from another. **The oil miracle revealed that the victory of the war was a miracle as well.** This is why we have eight days of Chanukah and this is why we are called בני בינה. The Pri Chadash as well answers we light eight days because one day alludes to the miracle of winning the war!

The Kedushas Levi asks; what is the connection between lighting and the war? Based on the Maharal, we can answer that lighting the menorah also commemorates the miracle of the war because the oil miracle revealed that the victory of the war was a miracle as well. The Tur (siman 676) writes after we light we say על התשועות ועל הנסים ועל הנפלאות שעשית לאבותינו על הנרות הללו אנו מדליקין על התשועות ועל הנסים ועל הנפלאות שפלאות ותשועות וניסים. Some add על המלחמות as well. If so, we clearly see the connection between lighting and the victory of the war. Even without this text, the words תשועות and ניסים are in the plural tense. The war is therefore alluded to. The holiday of Chanukah wouldn't have been enacted just because of the oil miracle. Rather, it is because of the war victory as well.

The Rambam writes (hilchos Chanukah 3, 3) that because of this the chachamim enacted eight days of Chanukah which start on the 25 of Kislev. These are days of praise and happiness. The candles are lit at night by the entrances of the houses to show and reveal the miracle. (ומפני זה התקינו חכמים שבאותו הדור שיהיו שמונת הימים האלו שתחלתן מליל חמשה ועשרים בכסלו ימי שמחה והלל ומדליקין בהן הנרות בערב על פתחי הבתים בכל לילה ולילה משמונת הלילות להראות ולגלות הנס.)

What does the Rambam mean? What's the difference between showing and revealing?

Furthermore, why do we light at night? The Ohr Samach also asks why we don't light during the day like they lit in the Beis Hamikdash. He answers that the light will not be effective during the day. It is difficult to understand how this answer of the Ohr Samach reconciles the seemingly repetitive language. Another answer is as follows; Chanukah has two purposes; to show the miracle and reveal the miracle. The actual lighting demonstrates that the miracle happened from a jug of oil. When we see it we will remember the miracle. This is what the Rambam means when he says 'to show.' The word reveals means to make known something that was hidden. Through lighting the victory miracle will become revealed. This is what the Rambam meant when he said 'reveal.'

Based on the aforementioned information we can derive a big principle. In order to remove from our hearts the thought we are the source for our accomplishments ("כחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל") (הזה), we need a week of miracles. Rabbi Chatzkel Levenstein says that one of the natural tendencies that are deeply rooted within us is the thought that we are the source for our accomplishments. Chanukah is a time to remember and engrave in our hearts that it's Hashem Who sends us blessing through our hard work!

The Chasam Sofer (Derashos derasha 67) offers an additional answer to the Beis Yosef's question. If the menorah was in the Beis Hamikdash, how did everyone know about the miracle? Furthermore, why do we say 'והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדש' / 'they kindled lights in the courtyards of Your sanctuary', when really they lit in the Beis Mikdash? The Chasam Sofer explains based on

a Rambam who says that anyone can light the menorah in the Mikdash, but the Kohen had to set it up (hilchos Beyas Mikdash 9, 7). We see from this that the menorah can be lit outside and then brought inside. Since the Mikdash was filled with idols, they lit it outside. All the Jews witnessed this lighting. Candles that burn outside require more oil to remain aflame than candles lit inside. The wind, especially during the winter time when they lit, causes more oil to be used. The first day there was a miracle as well because it remained lit even though they lit outside and it shouldn't have lasted as long as it did. According to the Chasam Sofer they lit outside because of the idols that were in the Beis Hamikdash. This can be questioned based on the text of על הנסים. First it says 'cleansed Your temple, purified the site of Your Holiness.' Subsequently it says 'they kindled lights in the courtyards of Your sanctuary.' That being so, when they lit, there idols were already removed, thus, they were able to light in the Beis Hamikdash. That being so, why did they light in the courtyard? Perhaps they were worried that the Beis Hamikdash wasn't completely cleaned and some idols remained.

Based on this Chasam Sofer we could offer another reason why they lit in the courtyard. The whole purpose of lighting in the courtyard was to show everyone that everything was a miracle, even the war. The best way to publicize this was to light in the courtyard, not the Beis Hamikdash.

We don't find this concept of פרסומי ניסא (publicizing the miracle) by other mitzvos. The Gemara in Yuma (45b) says that there is an obligation to make a fire on the mizbeach (alter), even though a fire would descend from the sky. The Chinuch (mitzvah 132) explains that the reason for this is in order to try to conceal miracles. Chanukah differs in this regard because the purpose of the oil miracle was to publicize the war miracle. Therefore, this concept of publicizing the miracle specifically exists by Chanukah.

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.