

# The Light and the Splendor

By Rabbi Daniel Glatstein



In all probability, the most well-known question in the entire gamut of Jewish literature is the question that is credited to the *Beis Yosef*. The Syrian-Greeks contaminated all the oil in the Heichal during their occupancy of the Holy Land, and when the Chashmonaim prevailed and returned to the Mikdash, they were able to locate one sealed flask of oil. Although the flask contained only enough oil for one night, it miraculously burned for eight. Asks the *Beis Yosef*, the miracle then was only for seven days, as the first night was not a miracle at all. Why do we celebrate a seven-day miracle for eight days?

Students and scholars alike have pondered this question for centuries since the miracle of Chanukah transpired. Scores of answers have been offered. The *sefer Ner L'Me'ah* has collected one hundred answers to this classic question, and more recently, a *sefer* has been published that has compiled five hundred answers to this question.

One of the most familiar and widely used answers to the *Beis Yosef*'s question is, in my opinion, the most diffi-

cult. In offering his approach to answer this question, the Alter of Kelm cites the story of Rav Chanina ben Dosa's daughter.

The *tzaddik* Rav Chanina ben Dosa was exceptionally poor, and his household had to subsist on the most basic provisions. One Friday night, after Shabbos had already been welcomed, Rabbi Chanina noticed that his daughter was despondent. He asked, "My dear daughter, why are you sad?"

She responded, "I used vinegar in my Shabbos lamps instead of oil; they will surely go out imminently and we will be left in complete darkness on the holy Shabbos."

Rabbi Chanina replied, "It matters not — it is of no significance. 'He Who says oil should burn will say that vinegar should burn.'"

Rabbi Chanina was expressing a fundamental principle. The fact that the juice of an olive can be burned as fuel is no less miraculous than if vinegar would burn. It is only that we are accustomed to the fact that olive oil burns, and so we take it for granted.

But, fundamentally, just because we are used to it does not remove it from the realm of the supernatural. Thus, if *shemen zayis* can burn, it is equally possible and reasonable for the "Programmer" of "nature" to allow vinegar to accomplish the same task.

Says the Alter of Kelm, seven days of Chanukah commemorate the miraculous feat that oil which should naturally last for only one night burned for seven additional nights. But still, there is one more day of Chanukah. And the added day of Chanukah is to enlighten us that even the first day was a miracle. The fact that oil can burn is a miracle unto itself. Just because we are used to it doesn't make it any less miraculous and supernatural. So, as we take the time to celebrate the blatant and obvious miracle — namely, "the seven days" — we add an additional day to recognize and proclaim that nature itself is miraculous.

Rav Moshe Feinstein offers the very same answer in *Derash Moshe*, and he uses this idea to resolve a difficulty in the text of *Al HaNissim*. Conspicuously absent from *Al HaNissim* is any

reference to the miracle of the oil. Nowhere is it mentioned that which the Gemara tells us: that they found only enough pure oil to burn for one day, yet it burned for eight. The only point mentioned about the *neiros* in the *Al HaNissim* are the words, "*v'hidliku neiros*, and they kindled lights." Why has the miracle been omitted?

Rav Moshe explains, utilizing the same approach we cited from the Alter of Kelm: The objective of the supernatural element of the miracle of Chanukah is to come to the realization that what we are accustomed to and label *teva*, nature, is no less miraculous. Thus, we say, "*V'hidliku neiros*" to indicate that the mere lighting of a lamp is worthy of celebration. The fact that Hashem has created a process where the juice of an olive can burn and provide fuel, that in itself is worthy of our wonderment and eternal appreciation.

This teaching echoes, perhaps, the lesson of the most famous words ever penned by the Ramban. The Ramban writes, at the end of Parshas Bo:

*From the great and obvious miracles, one comes to acknowl-*

edge hidden miracles, for they are the foundations of the entire Torah! For man has no share in the Torah of our Teacher Moshe until one believes that all our events and happenings are all miraculous — having no natural component whatsoever.

All the phenomena and processes with which we are familiar, and which we can name and seemingly predict, are in essence supernatural manifestations of the direct will of the Creator.

This deductive reasoning is the function of Chanukah: Through the open miracles of Chanukah, we come to recognize that even the mere burning of a candle is equally miraculous.

Rav Dovid Cohen, Rosh Yeshivah of Chevron, utilizes the above to explain the phraseology of the *pizmon*, *Yevanim Nikbetzu Alei*, in which we sing, “Men of insight — eight days established for song and jubilation.” Men of understanding — *binah* — enacted eight days of song and praise. Why are the Chashmonaim referred to as *bnei binah*? Where do we see the unusual understanding utilized in the legislation of Chanukah?

Rav Dovid explains. Actually, Chanukah should be seven days, as the Menorah burned miraculously for seven days. But the Chashmonaim did not simply make an academically dry observation; they used *binah*, inference. The word *binah* refers to the ability *l’hevin davar m’toch davar*, to infer a new idea from a previously accepted fact. They understood that not only were the seven days miraculous, but from the open miracles they came to recognize the hidden miracle of the actual burning of oil. Utilizing the acumen of *binah*, they added a further day and legislated an eight-day yom tov.

**T**his approach of the Alter of Kelm and Rav Moshe always troubled me. While the principle of the answer is a fundamental tenet of Judaism, we surely must recognize that all the processes that we take for granted are the hand of Hashem and remarkable manifestations of the endless wisdom and power of the Creator. Nevertheless, this seems completely unrelated to Chanukah. Can’t this principle be applied to any yom tov? Why don’t we tack on an additional day of Pesach? Why not celebrate the seventh day commemorating the Splitting of the Sea, and then add a day to celebrate water itself? We should never take nature

for granted, but what is it about Chanukah that this is the time selected to teach this all-important lesson?

And herein lies the secret of Chanukah.

A basic premise of the mystical dimension of the Torah is that there are ten *Sefiros*, ten spheres of Divine manifestation, through which Hashem created and runs the world. The names of the *Sefiros* are *Kesser* or *Daas*, *Chochmah*, *Binah*, *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferes*, *Netzach*, *Hod*, *Yesod*, and *Malchus*. The Gemara (*Chagigah* 12a) cites Rav Zutra bar Tuvia as quoting Rav, who says, “With ten *devarim* the world was created.” The Maharsha under-

into why Chanukah is eight days. *Hod* is the eighth *Sefirah*, and the *Sefirah* of *Hod* was *n’takein*, came to correction, on Chanukah to allow it to function to full capacity. In order to signal the completion and correction of the *middah* of *Hod*, the *Chida* teaches, the Sages enacted eight days of Chanukah, symbolizing the *tikkun* of the eighth *middah*.

What is *Hod*? In *Lashon HaKodesh*, the holy language, there are two words that seem to be synonyms: *hod* and *hadar*. These words are often paired together. Now, there are *Acharonim* who maintain that there are synonyms in *Lashon HaKodesh*, known as *sheimos*

their humility, wisdom, and good character that lends them an air of beauty. It is not external beauty, but internal splendor that shines forth from their essence.

These two qualities, *hod* and *hadar*, also reflect two perspectives on the world in general. The world can be seen in two lights. One can look at others, at events that transpire, and see the “outside,” the superficial way it seems. One can look at another human being and determine their quality by their external appearance. How well-formed, groomed, and presented one may be can be used as a barometer of the quality of the person.

This was the worldview of the Yevanim. They glorified the human body — *hadar*, external beauty. Body building, body sculpting, muscle tone were reflections, to their minds, of the quality of the person. They looked at the phenomena of the universe in the same way. They valued only what can be seen, weighed, and measured. These are processes that can be computed, analyzed, calculated: the externalities of the world, and that is all they accepted. The Ramban writes, “Muzzle the mouths of the wise men of nature who are drawn after Greek ideology, who deny anything that cannot be experienced by the senses.”

Yavan worshiped, appreciated, and valued *hadar*, the external beauty of people and the superficial appearance of how the world seems to be run. But we are a people of *hod*. We value essential character. We value the *middos* of the soul: humility, fear of G-d, wisdom, the splendor of the inner beauty of the Jewish *neshamah*. Likewise, we do not accept that this is a world of *hadar*, external glamour. Behind all the processes of nature; behind the veil of nature and evaporation, condensation, precipitation, digestion, respiration; behind the natural cycles of the rise and fall of empires is the inner light and splendor of all creation, the miraculous guiding hand of the Ribbono Shel Olam. *Teva*, the external veil, is the *Hadar*; the Divine inner working of how the world operates internally is the *Hod*. We believe that through our *tefillos*, our *limud haTorah*, our *maasim tovim*, the Ribbono Shel Olam, in a concealed manner, directs the various processes in proportion to our *avodah*. There is no “nature”: “All our events and happening are all miraculous — having no natural component whatsoever.”

The battle between the Yevanim and

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stands that this Gemara is referencing the ten *Sefiros* that are discussed in the mystical works of Torah. The subject of the ten *Sefiros* is perhaps the archetypal example of an esoteric teaching that is susceptible to misinterpretation and distortion. The most important point is that the *Sefiros* are not Hashem but rather emanations or manifestations of the Ribbono Shel Olam. As every yom tov and holy occasion is associated with a particular *Sefirah*, *Tikkunei Zohar* reveals that the *Sefirah* associated with Chanukah is *Hod*, Splendor. Rav Chaim Friedlander explains that the *middah* of *Hod* comes to fruition and is expressed in its fullest capacity on the yom tov of Chanukah. While these are the deepest of concepts, let us try to assimilate a degree of understanding in accordance with our capacity.

As the *middah* of *Hod* is closely associated with Chanukah, the *Chida* teaches that this gives added insight

*ha’nifradim*. The Malbim, Rav Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel, the great halachic decisor and Torah commentator, argues vehemently that there are no synonyms in the holy language. Each Hebrew word has a nuance of difference. Here is a prime example, teaches the Malbim: the words *hod* and *hadar*. The Malbim writes in many places that there is a fundamental difference between *hod* and *hadar*. *Hadar* refers to external beauty; attractive physical shape, appearance, and impression are described as *hadar*. For example, an *esrog* is referred to as *pri eitz hadar*, as its color, shape, and bumps are all characteristics of external physical beauty.

However, *hod* refers to *ziv penimi*, inner splendor and majesty. There are people whose objective physical appearance may not be pleasant or appealing, and yet there is an inner beauty to them, perhaps because of



the Chashmonaim is the battle of *hadar* vs. *hod*, external beauty vs. internal splendor, *teva* vs. *nissim*. The objective of Chanukah, then, is to pull away the veil of *hadar* and come to a clear recognition and awareness that just as the miraculous is the Ribbono Shel Olam, the inner beauty and mechanism of all of nature is likewise the Ribbono Shel Olam.

The very essence and purpose of Chanukah, then, is that through the seven days commemorating the open miracles, we come to recognize the inner splendor and beauty of the first day as well. Chanukah is the symbol of *Hod*; as such it is the opportune time to recognize that "He Who says oil should burn will say that vinegar should burn";

it is the designated time to appreciate the inner beauty of *teva* and not to

be distracted and lost due to its *hadar*.

The Vilna Gaon writes that the *middah* of *Hod* stems from the word *hoda'ah*, gratitude.

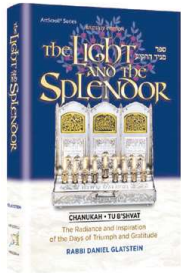
**From the great and obvious miracles, one comes to acknowledge hidden miracles, for they are the foundations of the entire Torah.**

Often, a person is resistant to having gratitude to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, saying to himself, "I planted, so naturally

I should reap." "I married, so naturally I will have children." "I worked, so I should earn." In a world of *hadar*, in a world of superficiality, in a work of nature, in a world of externality, ingrati-

ner mechanism. There is no nature. "I planted, but the Creator in His benevolence and kindness has to choose to grant me crops to reap." "I married, but the Master of the Universe, with His infinite mercy and compassion, has to bless us with children." "I worked, and the Omnipotent L-rd, *b'rachamei Shamayim*, has to decide to provide."

Looking at the *Hod*, the inner splendor of existence, allows one's heart not to ever feel entitled or expectant, but to live with endless gratitude. Thus, the word *Hod* is associated with the trait of *hoda'ah*. Chanukah is the yom tov when we celebrate the *Hod* of Hashem's Divine guidance, not only the miracle of an additional seven days of burning oil, but also the miracle of the burning of oil itself. Thus, Chanukah is the designated time to thank Hashem and sing to His Name, as it is the yom tov whose very essence is never to take anything for granted.



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