

History of Chanukah – Why is there no Meseches Chanukah? There is not even a complete Mishna dedicated to Chanukah. Why? Moreover – Aristotle was perhaps the most influential Greek philosopher. However, in regard to the Hellenist threat, it does not begin until 100 years AFTER Aristotle dies. Why? Finally, why does the miracle of the Menorah outclass the one about the battle? **Rav Betzalel Rudinsky Shlita** explains that when the Greeks attempted to get the Jews to forget the Torah, the intention was to attack Torah SheBaal Peh which is symbolized by the Menorah (as opposed to the Aron which houses Torah SheB'Ksav) which spreads light like the Kohanim who spread Torah (hence the miracle through the Kohanim and not the Neviim). At the time of Aristotle, there were still Neviim whose mere existence combatted the Hellenistic threat. Only after they passed was the time ripe for Aristotolian threat and Hellenism. It was the time of the supremacy of the oral Torah. This is also why Rebbe didn't give Chanukah its own Mesechta or even Mishna. The holiday is about the primacy of Torah She'Baal Peh, writing it down was a sign of its weakness not its strength.

The Essence of Chanukah – **Rav Wolbe ztl.** noted that the miracle of Chanukah is a direct result of the laxity the Kohanim had demonstrated previously toward the Avodah in the Beis Hamikdash. You demonstrate laxity and Hashem takes it away. Only after the Chashmonaim demonstrated their willingness to give up their lives for the sake of reclaiming their right to do the Avodah were they successful. Chanukah, says Rav Wolbe, revolves around Chizzuk – whether in the Parshiyos it surrounds as Yosef strengthens himself in the face of the Mrs. Potiphar threat or the miracles we are commanded to celebrate and recall, we should use the time to strengthen our Torah and Tefillah and service to Hashem.

Hallel and Hodaah – **The Shulchan Aruch (670:2)** notes that the day is established for praise but not for a meal. The Taz quotes the Rambam who explains that the days are not of HALLEL and Hodaah but rather SIMCHA and Hodaah. Ergo, the Taz argues that one has a Mitzva to add to his meals during Chanuka. However, this raises the question as to where HE got this idea from exactly. **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted in the name of **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** that the idea results from the rules concerning eulogies and fasts which are not allowed on Shabbos and Yom Tov because they are part of a fulfillment of the practices of mourning. And even where one BENEFITS from the fast on Shabbos, one cannot ACCEPT the fast as a Taanis on Shabbos. Similarly, one cannot eulogize or fast on Chanukah. This is a part of the responsibility of Simcha. That Simcha comes from the responsibility to recite a Hallel which is only obligatory because of the joy. Hence, although not explicit, has some obligation to rejoice and that rejoice should come out in some form of Seudah upgrade.

The purpose of Miracles – **Ramban (Shemos 13:15)** notes that the purpose in having miracles is to strengthen our Emunah in Hashem. By having supernatural miracles we will come to appreciate the natural miracles that are around us all the time – indeed the entirety of existence and creation is a complete miracle and the supernatural miracles remind us about this point constantly. **Rav Yonasan Sacks Shlita** added that there are 2 interpretations for the word Nes. The first is something supernatural but the second refers to a marker. Rav Sacks added that Ramban could combine both uses here. A Miracle is also a sign-marker that even things that do not appear miraculous indeed are. This, he adds, is the secret to the two messages of Chanukah. The oil miracle reminds us that even the military victory was not a coincidence but rather part of Hashem's plan in the world. Chanukah's message is to see Hashem's hand every single moment of every day.

One candle to eight or 8 down to one? – The Talmud notes the famous debate between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel on this point (Shabbos 21b). But seriously, how could anyone possibly think that we would count from 8 to 1? **Rav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht ztl.** noted that this Machlokes was likely tied into a different one – As to whether we recognize the light from the Havdala candle as Meor or Meorei HaEish (See Berachos 54b). Beis Shammai notes that the different colors of flame unite into one as they emerge from a single source while Beis Hillel sees the single flame as breaking into many. The Chanukah candle situation too, is similarly understood. Are we growing from a single source to the mass crowd or counting to get back to the source as we slowly melt and blend into the source of Kedusha itself. Beis Hillel counts as we each rise and the Kedusha emanates from the source and spreads the light beyond.

Pure olive oil – **Rashi** notes that for the Menorah we need Zach even though one can use a second press in Menachos and Nesachim. Why the difference? **Rav Shteinman Zatzal** suggested that there is a difference between performance and illumination. One can bring a Korban even if it has some sediment in the oil and is not pure. But the light of the Menorah like the Hashpaah it represents needs to be pure if it will be successful and long lasting.

The Gemara notes that one who is regular with candles has children who are Talmidei Chachamim, careful in Mezuzah will have a nice home and in Tzitzis will have a nice garment (Shabbos 23b) – Rav Shimon Schwab ztl. points out that we find people who are careful in these areas and do not seem to have the Beracha of wealth. Therefore the Beracha must refer to a Beracha in Olam HaBa. What about the issue with children? How can that refer to Olam HaBa? Rav Schwab Ztl. explains that raising children who are Talmidei Chachamim is M'ein Olam HaBa.

Zos Chanukah - Sfas Emes notes that the last day of Chanukah has a unique significance and power similar to that of Shmini Atzeres. It is the extra day that was not part of the miracle (after all, oil for one day was found) and represents the special bond we have with Hashem. Citing numerous Chassidishe and Litvishe sources, **Rav Elimelech Biderman Shlita** noted that one should set aside time during this day to ask Hashem for his personal needs – there are many different Chassidishe Rebbeim and Kabbalists who found that prayer for different needs – Yeshuah, Parnassa, Puriyut etc. are useful on this day particularly, as it has strong connection to those ideas.