



Chanukah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees against the Hellenist tyrants that imposed antireligious rule and desecrated the Holy Temple in 165 BCE. On the 25th of Kislev, the Maccabees entered the Temple following the battle and wanted to restart the Holy Service that had ceased under foreign rule. They found only one day's supply of oil that they could use to rededicate the Menorah. However, the tiny flask of oil lasted until they were able to create new, pure oil - eight days. To commemorate this miracle, we light candles in our homes on the eight nights of Chanukah.

Rabbi Yosef Karo, in his sixteenth-century compendium of Jewish law, *Beit Yosef*, noted that the number of nights we celebrate seems to be incorrect. After all, if the oil would have naturally lasted one day but instead lasted eight, only seven of those days were miraculous. If we light candles each night to commemorate God's miracle, should we not light for *only seven* nights instead of *eight*?

Rabbi Karo suggests three possible answers to his question:

- 1) The priests in the Temple, knowing they would need eight days to procure new oil, divided the original flask into eight equal parts. The miracle, then, was not that it lasted seven extra nights, but rather that each night's oil lasted the entire night rather than only an eighth of the night as they would have expected.
- 2) Each night the priests poured oil from the flask into the Temple's Menorah, the flask miraculously refilled immediately. Therefore, the miracle took place over eight days.
- 3) The miracle was that, although the Menorah's candles burned, the oil was not consumed, and so, we can view the miracle as having taken place over eight days.

*I would like to suggest a completely different and paradigm-shifting answer to his question.* All of our holidays commemorate great, public miracles: the exodus from Egypt (Pesach), God's protection of our people in the wilderness (Sukkot), and so on. But those are not the only miracles we experience. In his commentary to Exodus 13:17, the great medieval sage Nachmanides writes "From the great and public miracles, we may recognize the hidden miracles, which are the foundation of the entire Torah...[we believe] that all our things and occurrences are all miracles...everything comes from God."

We have come to appreciate his perspective now more than ever: each and every day is its own miracle. Our lives, our health, our safety, our family and friends, the food we have to eat and water to drink - everything in the universe around us is nothing short of miraculous; nature is a miracle that happens every day. When the sages established a holiday specifically meant to celebrate God's miracles (we add *Al HaNissim* - "on the miracles" - to our liturgy and recite a special blessing on miracles when we light the candles), in their infinite wisdom, they added one day to commemorate the daily miracle of *just being*. The first day of Chanukah is our day to appreciate the blessings that God gives us each day, and to recognize that it too is a miracle. A wise man once said: "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is." May this upcoming first day of Chanukah inspire us to live our lives appreciating our daily miracles.

Wishing you and your families a *Chag Urim Same'ach* (Happy Chanukah),

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