



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת היום

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

פרשת וישב תשי"ע 5770 Parshas Vayeishev

MIRACULOUS EXPANSION

Almost as familiar as the wondrous miracle of the Menorah to which the eight days of Chanukah correspond is the Beis Yosef's question about this figure.

From a flask of oil large enough only to burn for one day, the Menorah – at that fateful time – burned for eight days instead. Technically speaking, though, the duration of the *miracle* part was only seven days. While the oil lasted for eight, it was supposed to have burned for one – meaning that the oil lasted for seven extra, miraculous days. Consequently, the Beis Yosef (*Orach Chaim* 670) wonders, shouldn't the Yom Tov of Chanukah only have been a seven-day affair?

NOT EX-NIHILO

One of the numerous resolutions proffered to this time-honored question is that of the Taz (*ibid.*). He bases his exposition on a well-known incident from the Navi (*Melachim II* 4:1-7).

A distraught widow approached Elisha – disciple and successor of Eliyahu Hanavi, himself capable of performing wonders – to relate her plight. She had no money to pay a hard-hearted creditor, who was coming to seize her children as payment.

Elisha asked her if she had anything in the house, to which she answered that a container of oil was her sole possession. The prophet counseled her to borrow pots from the neighbors and to “empty” her own oil into those pots. Heeding his instructions, the woman found that, miraculously, her own container seemed to be bottomless. She kept pouring and pouring more oil, filling container after container, way in excess of the small quantity with which she started. Eventually, she sold the surplus

for a hefty profit, paid off the creditor, and had enough left for her own sustenance.

It must be noted that when performing this miracle, Elisha first ascertained that the woman possessed some oil of her own. Why was this necessary? Couldn't someone of Elisha's stature, with the ability to effect supernatural occurrences, have arranged for abundant oil to appear even out of an empty jar?

The Taz understands that an important principle is at play here. Apparently, miraculous blessing is not summoned from thin air. It must have some basis – however miniscule – from which to grow. And so Elisha could not have caused the oil to just “appear”; instead, he had to utilize existing oil, from which much more of the substance would miraculously spring forth.

This, too, was the basis for the Chanukah miracle. The oil of the first day was critical for the entirety of the miracle. In order for the oil to last the extra days, it had to expand from the original, pre-existing store. And so a miniscule amount remained from that first day, which served as the basis for the ensuing miraculous fuel. Being such an essential part of the miracle, the first day was rightfully included in the festival established to commemorate this remarkable event.

The *Ta'amei Haminhagim* (840) sees the Taz's resolution of the Beis Yosef's query reflected in the *Ma'oz Tzur* hymn. ומנותר קנקנים – It was from the residual oil that remained in the flask, נעשה גם לשושנים – that the miracle was wrought for the Chashmonaim. Because this fact – that the oil of day one was the critical factor enabling the performance of the miracle – was wisely and correctly discerned by the בְּנֵי בִינָה (the wise ones), therefore: ימי שמונה קבעו שיר ורננים – they

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established an eight (not seven) day festival of song and rejoicing, including that first day in the tally.

THE ULTIMATE SHIUR

Chazal teach us that the Menorah is a symbol for the Torah itself (*Shemos Rabbah* 37:3). The aforementioned “miraculous principle” – that when a firm basis is provided, there can be a great expansion of blessing – applies to Torah, as well. This idea is manifest in the Mishnah at the end of Uktzin (3:12):

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא להנחיל לכל צדיק וצדיק שלש מאות ועשרה עולמות, שנאמר, להנחיל אהבי יש ואצרתיהם אמלא.

“R’ Yehoshua ben Levi said: In the future, The Holy One Blessed is He will grant (as reward) 310 worlds to each righteous individual, as it says (*Mishlei* 8:21), ‘To bequeath substantial (reward) to my beloved ones, and I shall fill their storehouses’.”

The Mishnah here understands the above-quoted verse from *Mishlei* as referring to the incredible bounty awaiting the *tzaddikim* in the World to Come. However, elsewhere (*Sukkah* 28a) the Gemara seems to expound this *pasuk* as referring to something else entirely. Speaking of the marvelous accomplishments of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai, the Gemara states that he learned basically all there is to learn – Tanach, Mishnah, Gemara, *halachah*, etc. – in fulfillment of the verse “To bequeath substantiality to my beloveds, and I shall fill their storehouses.” Is this *pasuk* in *Mishlei* referring to the World to Come, or to the ideal quota of Torah study in this world?

R’ Shneur Kotler (*Noam Siach* 88) explains that there really is no inherent contradiction. The verse in *Mishlei* actually reflects the very principle laid down by the Taz, on a grand scale.


The *sefarim* relate (see, e.g., introduction to *Toras Habayis* from the Chofetz Chaim) that a main function of the Torah study in which we engage in

this world is really only a preparation for the World to Come. As a creation of Hakadosh Boruch Hu, Who is limitless, Torah contains infinite depth. The learning one accrues in this world serves as the building blocks for one to achieve the dazzling, boundless Torah Wisdom contained in every facet of the Torah, secrets that will only be revealed in the World to Come.

In other words, by studying Torah in this world, one creates within himself the foundations of “treasure-houses,” which will only be completely filled in the World to Come. At that point, the Torah he accumulated in this world will serve as the basis for an overwhelming outpouring of intense revelation from the Creator. From the comparatively limited amount he was able to achieve in this world, Hashem will multiply his store of Torah knowledge, to the extent that it will expand to the capacity of entire worlds.

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