עלי דשא
Alei Deshe

The Gutman Edition



RAV SHAUL ALTER on Moadim

Kislev – Adar

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Divrei Berachah from the Rosh Yeshiva[1]

for the Sefer Alei Deshe on Elul-Tishrei

I am happy to hear that the sefer is close to publication. I cannot comment on the quality of the work, as I cannot read English. However, I know that entire communities will gain from this English edition.

The Torah was written on stones in seventy languages, as the commentaries explain, not necessarily so that the nations should understand it—in fact, according to one opinion, the writing was covered with plaster. It was because the Jews would eventually be exiled and scattered in all sorts of places. When the Torah was written in all of these languages, this served to purify the *galus* somewhat.

Chazal objected to the translation of the Torah to Greek; that is because the intention was bad. The purpose then was to extract the Torah from its holy confines and put it in foreign hands. But when done as a mitzvah commanded by the Torah, it was a means of *taharah*.

The Torah uses words with roots in foreign languages. Chazal point out *totafos*, for example. The explanation given by the Shelah and others—all languages used for Torah learning are rooted in the original *leshon hakodesh* with which Hashem created the world—can be relevant here, in a sense.

I am in no way comparing my words to the Torah, as obviously there is no comparison. Yet perhaps the above can apply in some way to 'small-talk of Torah' *(pitpatya d'Oraysa)*, and certainly it applies to the pesukim and *maamarei Chazal* quoted within.

This work was produced to benefit the public, and *ashrei chelkam* to all who had a part in it.

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1. Delivered on the *Libeinu B'Toraso* hotline to Yitzchok Rozenthal.

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Introduction

With Hashem's help, we are pleased to present ***Alei Deshe – Rav Shaul Alter on Moadim, Kislev–Adar***, a selection of talks and *derashos* given by the Gerrer Rosh Yeshiva, Harav Hagaon Rav Shaul Alter *shlita*, relating to the *moadim* and special days of these months.

Since 5781, we have published ***Alei Deshe***, a weekly newsletter of the Rosh Yeshiva's talks on *parshas hashavua* rendered into English. With Hashem's help, this *gilyon* has been well received around the world. At the request of many—and with encouragement from the Rosh Yeshiva, who has spoken many times of the great benefit to the *tzibbur* in publishing *divrei Torah* in English—we then undertook to compile this *sefer* based on hundreds of previously published *gilyonos*.

The first volume of the *Moadim* series, on the *Yamim Noraim*, with Hashem's help was warmly received. Countless readers found it a source of *chizuk*, reflection, and *avodas Hashem*. The present volume, on Chanukah and Purim, continues the series with Torah treasures from the Rosh Yeshiva on the *moadim* and milestones of the months of Kislev through Adar. Besides Chanukah and Purim, these include Shovavim, the *Arba Parshios*, and *yahrzeits* of *tzaddikim* that fall in this season.

We were also privileged to begin a new series, ***Alei Deshe – Rav Shaul Alter on Chumash***. Its first volume, on *Sefer Bereishis*, has already been published. With Hashem's help, a broad Torah undertaking is taking shape, making the Rosh Yeshiva's Torah accessible to English speakers through the yearly cycles of the *moadim* and the weekly *parshah*.

The talks delivered by the Rosh Yeshiva on many occasions over the years, and primarily at *shalosh seudos* every Shabbos, are full of *chiddushei Torah* on topics of Chassidus, *cheshbon hanefesh*, *teshuvah*, *emunah*, and *avodas Hashem*. Spoken in a clear and penetrating style, warm with true love for *Klal Yisrael*, they aim to inspire the listener and draw him close to *avodas Hashem*.

This *sefer* was compiled from a careful selection of the *derashos* that appeared in years of *gilyonos*. They are adapted for the reader's benefit, while the content and spirit remain faithful to the source. The English translation was done professionally and with care, with minor clarifications added where necessary.

We would like to take this opportunity to express profound gratitude to all those who took part in publishing the **Alei Deshe** *gilyonos*, from which these talks were gathered.

First and foremost, to the premier supporter of the project, **Rav Yosef Wassertheil and family**, the initiators and supporters of these *gilyonos*. Their part in both the substance and the spirit of this undertaking is truly priceless.

Likewise, we thank the generous people who have taken part in supporting and distributing the *gilyonos* over the years: **Rav Shaul Wassertheil and family, Rav Pesach Konstam and family, Rav Zev Alter and family, and Rav Refael Yehudah Rotman and family.**

Special appreciation to the patron of the present edition, **Rav Yehudah Leib Avraham Gutman and family**, whose generous support made the publication of this *sefer* possible.

With quiet devotion and mighty love of Torah, they undertook to support the printing and distribution of this edition, as part of the larger initiative of spreading the Torah of the Rosh Yeshiva *shlita*. May their patronage bring *berachah* and *hatzlachah* to them and their children, with good health, *parnassah*, and *nachas* from all their descendants for many years to come.

We hope that this *sefer* will be a source of *chizuk* and *hisorerus* to every reader. And may it be a *zechus* for the Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* and his family, whose devotion and whose Torah continue to illuminate the path of so many.

Maareches Alei Deshe
Yitzchok Rosenthal — Yisroel Yosef Rottenberg

Chanukah

Lessons from the Oil

The Pach Shemen Within[1]

The Baal Shem Tov was once traveling with Rav Mendel, the Maggid of Bar, through a desolate area when Rav Mendel became dangerously thirsty. The Baal Shem Tov asked whether he truly believed that Hashem could provide water even there. After Rav Mendel affirmed his complete faith, a gentile unexpectedly appeared carrying two pails of water and gave them to drink. When asked why he was carrying water through such an isolated place, the man explained that his master had inexplicably ordered him to fetch water from a distant well, causing him to pass through that very location.

Elucidating what had just occurred, the Baal Shem Tov explained that Hashem prepares salvation in advance, so that it is ready as soon as the person is worthy of it—when he exercises *emunah* and *bitachon*.

In *Parshas Mikeitz*, the Ohr Hachaim says that Pharaoh had been having the same dream for two years, forgetting it each morning. Chazal[2] say that Yosef was punished for asking the *sar hamashkim* to

1. *Mikeitz–Shabbos Chanukah* 5782.
2. *Bereishis Rabbah* 89:3.

mention him to Pharaoh, which displayed a flaw in his *bitachon*. We have no concept of Yosef's lofty *madreigah*, but we are taught that he needed to improve his trust in Hashem.[3] He would be imprisoned until his *bitachon* reached the proper level. Based on this *yesod* of the Baal Shem Tov, Rav Pinchas of Koritz[4] explains that from that time, Pharaoh began having his peculiar dream every night, so that when Yosef reached the proper level of *bitachon*, his salvation could occur immediately.

The miracle of Chanukah, as well, was prepared well in advance. The Imrei Emes teaches that one day, many years before the miracle of Chanukah, those tasked with preparing oil for the Menorah prepared the amount of oil needed for one night and poured it into a flask of that capacity. Inexplicably, the flask didn't fill up. They continued to pour until eight days' worth of oil finally filled it. Realizing that something extraordinary had happened, the Kohen Gadol affixed his seal to the flask,[5] and it was hidden away. Many years later, the Chashmonaim searched the Beis Hamikdash for pure oil with which to light the Menorah. They could have used oil that was *tamei*, since most of Klal Yisrael was *tamei* at the time—but they yearned fiercely to light the Menorah *b'taharah*. It was then revealed to them that a special flask of oil had been prepared for this occasion, and it burned for eight days. Chanukah contains the letters הוּכַן ח׳ – *prepared for eight [days]*. Because the Yidden strove to serve Hashem in purity, their salvation stood prepared for them.

This contains an important lesson. We do not always feel that we have the ability to serve Hashem properly. But we must know that the *kochos* are already there, stowed away for us. All that is necessary is a strong desire on our part to serve Hashem with purity.

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3. See *Likutei HaRim*.
4. *Imrei Pinchas*.
5. See *Likutei Yehudah* to *Chanukah*; *Michtavei Torah* 12.

The same also holds true on the individual level. The Midrash[6] states that Jews are compared to olive oil, which doesn't mix with other liquids and always rises to the top. The Sfas Emes[7] explains that the *neshamah* of a Jew is compared to oil. The Gemara (*Berachos* 10a) states that a person's *neshamah* fills his whole body and gives it life. Yet although it invigorates the whole body, it remains apart. We say in *Asher Yatzar*, וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת; we praise Hashem specifically for the wondrous synthesis of physical body and spiritual soul—together, yet separate.

The soul and the body can be compared to the oil and the flask that contains it. The Chanukah miracle took place not only with oil, but with a פַּךְ שֶׁמֶן – *a flask of oil*. Just as Klal Yisrael's desire for closeness to Hashem led to a *nes* with the oil flask, so can the body of a Yid experience *nissim* if he longs to come close to Hashem.

The *pasuk* (Tehillim 107:9) states: כִּי הִשְׂבִּיעַ נֶפֶשׁ שׁוֹקֵקָה – *For He satisfied the yearning soul*. My father noted[8] that the first letters of כִּי הִשְׂבִּיעַ נֶפֶשׁ spell כֹּהֵן. The miracles of Chanukah, both the battle victories and the *nes* of the Menorah, occurred עַל יְדֵי כֹּהֲנֶיךָ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים – *through Your holy kohanim*. It was their pining to serve Hashem in purity which brought about the *yeshuos*.

My father added that the last letters of כִּי הִשְׂבִּיעַ נֶפֶשׁ שׁוֹקֵקָה spell עֲשִׂיָּה – *action*. Every Yid's *neshamah* experiences spiritual yearning, but it is sometimes mistaken for worldly passions, resulting in pursuits that counter *kedushah*. It takes discernment to discover the *neshamah's* true call. One who heeds its call and seeks closeness with Hashem will find that a *koach* of *taharah* has already been set aside for him. His נֶפֶשׁ שׁוֹקֵקָה will lead him to עֲשִׂיָּה, proper conduct.

6. *Shemos Rabbah* 36:1.
7. *Tetzaveh* 5661, s.v. *od b'midrash.*
8. *Pnei Menachem, Naso,* p. 61.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 25a) states: מִי שֶׁאָמַר לַשֶּׁמֶן וְיִדְלֹק הוּא יֹאמַר לַחֹמֶץ וְיִדְלֹק – *the One Who commanded oil to burn will command vinegar to burn*. On Chanukah, Hashem was revealed as מִי שֶׁאָמַר לַשֶּׁמֶן וְיִדְלֹק, commanding oil to burn supernaturally. So too, Hashem can be יֹאמַר לַחֹמֶץ וְיִדְלֹק. Even one who has sinned and is like vinegar can ignite the flame of his soul, revealing the great potential of his pure *neshamah* and improving his ways.

May Hashem help that we merit to illuminate the darkness, fulfilling the will of Hashem in the proper way.

The Nissim of Oil[9]

When we light the Chanukah menorah, we recite the *berachah* of *she'asah nissim*. *Sefarim* ask: why do we say *nissim* ("miracles"), in the plural, and not *nes* ("miracle"), in the singular? Even if we count the victory of the Chashmonaim as a separate miracle, it is only in commemoration of the miracle of the oil that we recite the *berachah*. This is clear from the Gemara (*Shabbos* 23a), which states that we recite *she'asah nissim* every day of Chanukah because the miracle continued each day.[10]

Sefarim state[11] that the oil that burned for eight days during the Chanukah story had already been used for miracles during the time of the *nevi'im*: Eliyahu assured the woman of Tzarfas, in the Name of Hashem, כַּד הַקֶּמַח לֹא תִכְלֶה וְצַפַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן לֹא תֶחְסָר – *The jug of flour shall not run out and the flask of oil shall not lack* (Melachim I 17:14). Later, Elisha told the wife of Ovadiah that her last bit of oil would continue to pour into as many vessels as she could prepare, and, after paying

9. *Chanukah* 5782.
10. See *Sfas Emes, Likutim*, s.v. *b'birchas*; 5634, fourth night, s.v. *baal*; 5645, s.v. *b'birchas*; *Likutei Yehudah*, Bereishis 26:22.
11. See *Shach al HaTorah*, Bereishis 32:25; *Birkas Shmuel* (Rav Shmuel Kaidenover), end of *Mikeitz*; *Kav Hayashar*, ch. 96.

her creditors, וְאַתְּ וּבָנַיִךְ תִּחְיִי בַּנּוֹתָר – *you and your sons will live on the remainder* (Melachim II 4:7).

When Eliyahu said "the flask of oil shall not lack," it was an assurance that her oil would last until the end of time. To Elisha's promise, *and you and your sons will live on the remainder,* the Midrash[12] adds: until Techiyas Hameisim. The Beis Yisrael[13] explains that this is a reference to the miracle of Chanukah.[14] The Gemara (*Yoma* 29a) teaches that the Chanukah miracle took place after the closing of the Written Torah. In the absence of clear Heavenly direction, the Jews would hold onto this miracle, strengthening themselves until the coming of Mashiach and Techiyas Hameisim.

The connection between the miracles of the *nevi'im* and the miracle of Chanukah can also be seen in the wording of the *pesukim*. Ovadiah's wife told Elisha that she had only אָסוּךְ שָׁמֶן – *a jar of oil* (4:2). Those words have the *gematria* (with the *kollel*) of חֲנֻכַּת. The word בַּנּוֹתָר, in Elisha's response, shares the same letters as בַּנֵּרוֹת. This, then, is why we say *she'asah* ***nissim,*** in the plural. We are referring to all the miracles that occurred with the oil.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 23a) says that women are obligated in *ner Chanukah* because אַף הֵן הָיוּ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַנֵּס – *They, too, were part of that miracle*. Rashi and Tosafos debate this. Perhaps the intent is that women were involved in the previous miracles that took place with the oil, in the days of Eliyahu and Elisha.

The wife of Ovadiah was a poor widow. It is remarkable that she didn't ask Elisha for help until her creditor threatened to take her sons as slaves. Her creditor was Yehoram ben Achav, an apostate Jew, and it was her fear that her sons would be led to apostasy that brought her to ask for help. Thus, the miracle oil of Chanukah was rooted in a mother's *mesirus nefesh* for *chinuch*.

12. *Bereishis Rabbah* 35:3.
13. 5717, eighth night נר ח.
14. See *Tiferes Shlomo*, s.v. *v'ishah achas* and s.v. *Eretz Yisrael lehashkicham*.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 23b), according to some texts,[15] states: הָרָגִיל בְּנֵר חֲנֻכָּה הַוְיָין לֵיהּ בָּנִים תַּלְמִידֵי חֲכָמִים – *One who is diligent with ner Chanukah will have sons who will be talmidei chachamim.* Just as the previous miracle performed with the oil was for *chinuch*, so did the miracle of Chanukah occur to enable Yidden to raise *gitteh kinder*. The *pasuk* (Yeshayahu 38:19) says, חַי חַי הוּא יוֹדְךָ כָּמוֹנִי הַיּוֹם אָב לְבָנִים יוֹדִיעַ אֶל אֲמִתֶּךָ – *A living person, a living person, he shall thank You, as I do today. A father can make Your truth known to children.*

The *gematria* of חַי חַי is thirty-six, the number of *lecht* we light throughout Chanukah—through which *a father can make Your truth known to children*. The light of *mitzvas ner Chanukah*, when fulfilled in holiness and purity, contains a special *segulah* to be *mechanech* one's children on the proper path. This can be read into the *berachah* of *she'asah nissim*, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה—the *nissim* of yesteryear continue, since Chanukah is a time of relaying our *chinuch* to the next generation.

The *pasuk* (Tehillim 119:105) states, נֵר לְרַגְלִי דְּבָרֶךָ – *Your word is a lamp for my feet.* The Sfas Emes[16] explains that רַגְלִי refers to a low *madreigah*, just as the feet are the lowest part of one's body, and are most prone to habit (הֶרְגֵּל). Through the נֵר of Chanukah, one's "feet" can be elevated, lifting him out of his lowliness. Indeed, the menorah is supposed to be placed three *tefachim* above the ground, representing a halachic separation.[17]

There is another lesson in נֵר לְרַגְלִי. The Gemara (*Eiruvin* 70b) says that a son is like his father's leg. When we heed Chazal's directive and are בְּנֵר רָגִיל, carrying the lesson of Chanukah into the whole year by lifting our feet above the mundaneness of the ground, our

15. See *Behag, Hilchos Chanukah* 9; Rabbeinu Chananel; Meiri; Ran; Rosh 13.
16. See 5655, s.v. *hamitzvah*; 5659, s.v. *mezuzah*; 5631, fifth night, in the name of the Chiddushei HaRim.
17. See *O.C.* 671:6.

"legs"—our children—will be uplifted as well, and we will merit to be *mechanech* them on the proper *Yiddishe* path.

Mu'at Machzik Hamerubeh[18]

נַעֲשָׂה בּוֹ נֵס וְהִדְלִיקוּ מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁמוֹנָה יָמִים.

A miracle occurred with it (בּוֹ)*, and they lit from it for eight days (Shabbos 21b).*

The Imrei Emes notes the wording נַעֲשָׂה בּוֹ נִיסָּא and explains that when they poured the oil into the flask, miraculously the oil was absorbed into the flask itself, so that it could be filled eight separate times with oil. Since the flask itself had become the vessel of a miracle, possessing the capacity for *mu'at machzik hamerubeh*, the Kohen Gadol sealed it with his seal. This also resolves the famous question of the Beis Yosef.[19]

Why was the miracle arranged to occur within the flask itself, allowing a small vessel to contain so much? On the simple level, this ensured that what burned was ordinary olive oil rather than miraculous oil, and it also prompted the Kohen Gadol to seal and conceal the flask.

The Gemara states (*Berachos* 40a):

"Come and see that the attribute of Hashem is unlike the attribute of flesh and blood. With flesh and blood, an empty vessel can contain, while a full vessel cannot. But Hashem is not so. A full vessel can contain, whereas an empty one cannot, as it states: 'If you will surely listen'—if you listen, you will continue to listen; if not, you will not listen."

The Maharsha explains that when one who is already filled with Torah continues to receive more, it is not simply because his intellect

18. *Shabbos Chanukah* 5777.
19. See *Michtavei Torah* 12.

has been sharpened or his understanding expanded through study. Rather, it is specifically the "attribute of Hashem" that enables his growth. By attaching himself to the Giver of the Torah—Hashem, Who transcends the limitations of nature—a person merits becoming a "full vessel that still contains more." Physical objects occupy space, and therefore a full vessel cannot hold anything further. Spirituality, however, is not bound by measure or limitation. Since "the whole earth is filled with His glory," a vessel filled with spirituality has no fixed boundary and can always receive more. This is why the Gemara refers specifically to the attribute of Hashem, rather than the attribute of wisdom or Torah.

The Greeks' primary objective was spiritual persecution: "to make them forget Your Torah and to turn them away from the statutes of Your will." In turn, the miracle of Chanukah was also spiritual, whereby the outnumbered Chashmonaim overcame the Greeks, preserving the observance of Hashem's commandments and the study of His Torah.

Accordingly, the miracle of Chanukah reflected this very principle. Through their attachment to Hashem, Bnei Yisrael rose above the natural order and overcame the Greeks, who sought to make them forget the Torah. The miracle therefore took the form described by the Imrei Emes—a full vessel that nevertheless continued to contain more.

This also explains the Gemara's expression, "Come and see." At first glance, it would seem more appropriate to say, "Come and learn," or "Come and hear." Rather, "Come and see" alludes to the miracle of the Chanukah lights—which we are specifically commanded to look at—in that they provide a tangible illustration of this attribute of Hashem.

The Maharsha further asks why the Gemara derives this principle from the doubled expression, "If you will surely listen," since elsewhere we often say that "the Torah speaks in *lashon bnei*

Adam." According to our explanation, however, the matter is readily understood. When the Torah says, "If you will surely listen," it is impossible to say that it merely speaks in human idiom, for it is describing the attribute of Hashem, which transcends the natural limitations of man.

Nor is this heavenly call directed only to Torah study. In every challenge a person faces, the same question should echo in his ears: Do you truly love Hashem? One must reflect and remember who stands behind the test, who is examining us. *Der Tate in Himmel*—our Father in Heaven—awaits and longs for every Jew to overcome the *yetzer hara*, to bring Him *nachas*, and to illuminate all the *olamos*. In every struggle, one must choose to listen first to Hashem rather than to his *yetzer*.

These victories over the *yetzer hara* also belong to "the attribute of Hashem" and the principle of the full vessel applies to them as well. For *ruchniyus* gathers everything into a single whole, as the *pasuk* states (Bamidbar 7:14): כַּף אַחַת עֲשָׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה קְטֹרֶת – *One golden spoon, its weight ten shekels, filled with incense*. Chazal expound (*Chagigah* 23b): "The Torah made everything that is in the spoon into one." The *sefarim* explain that if a person is כּוֹפֵף—bending himself to Hashem's will, he will indeed bring Hashem a *golden* treasure.[20]

Lights of Chinuch[21]

The Shiltei Giborim cites an opinion explaining that there are eight days of Chanukah because, at that time, they reinstituted the *avodah* of the Beis Hamikdash which had been annulled by Antiochus. However, this explanation does not appear to answer the question of why there are eight days of Chanukah.

20. See *Yechahen Pe'er, Shabbos Hagadol* 30.
21. *Zos Chanukah* 5772.

There is another famous question asked: There is a rule that *tumah hutrah b'tzibbur*—communal service may be performed in a state of ritual impurity—why, then, was it necessary to miraculously find pure oil at all? Based on the Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 43a) which indicates that the Chashmonaim lit a new Menorah, and the ruling of "the service itself inaugurates the vessels" (*Yoma* 12b), the *sefarim*[22] explain that although the *avodah* may indeed be performed in a state of impurity when necessary, the dedication (*chinuch*) of the Menorah cannot begin in impurity. For how can the *haschalah* be lacking in *shleimus*? Its inauguration thus had to take place with *tahor* oil.

My ancestor, Rav Yaakov Meir Biderman,[23] and the Kli Chemdah ask: Granted that the first lighting required pure oil because it served as the dedication of the Menorah, but why was the miracle extended over eight days?

The Imrei Emes explains that all eight days of Chanukah are days of *chinuch*—days of dedication. In fact, the very name Chanukah alludes to *chinuch*. The source for this is the *Pesikta Rabbasi* (6), which relates that the construction of the *Mishkan* was completed on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, but it remained dismantled until the first of Nissan. Kislev, as it were, forfeited the privilege of the dedication, and Hashem said, "I will repay it." How did He repay it? Through the dedication of the House of the Chashmonaim.

The Torah does not explicitly state how many days the dedication of the Beis Hamikdash should last. We find that Moshe Rabbeinu dedicated the *Mishkan* over eight days—even serving on the eighth day and offering the *korbanos*—whereas Shlomo Hamelech dedicated the Beis Hamikdash over seven days (Divrei Hayamim II 7:9). Chazal reveal, however, that the dedication of the Chashmonaim was

22. Imrei Emes (*Michtavei Torah* 66) in the name of the Kotzker; *Kli Chemdah* (*Emor* 9) in the name of the Chiddushei HaRim.

23. *Michtavei Torah* 15.

modeled after the dedication of the *Mishkan*, and therefore, it also extended over eight days.

This explains the Shiltei Giborim and also why the Gemara attributes Chanukah solely to the miracle of the lights, without mentioning the dedication of the Beis Hamikdash. For the miracle of the oil is synonymous with the days of the dedication. Just as Moshe Rabbeinu's dedication of the *Mishkan* lasted eight days, so too the dedication in the days of the Chashmonaim extended over all eight days of Chanukah. What's more, since *chinuch* was at stake, each day had to be established in complete purity, thus requiring the miracle of *tahor* oil for all eight days.

Why, in fact, did the dedication of the *Mishkan* last eight days, whereas the dedication of the Beis Hamikdash lasted only seven?

The Gemara (*Yoma* 72a, *Sukkah* 45b) expounds the *pasuk* (Shemos 26:15), *You shall make the beams of the Mishkan from shittim wood, standing*: "*Standing*—for eternity." Yet Chazal also say (*Sotah* 9a) that the beams of the *Mishkan* were hidden away. Moreover, what benefit is there in the beams enduring forever if the *Mishkan* itself is absent?

The explanation is that Moshe Rabbeinu erected the *Mishkan* through a miracle, for according to the natural order it was impossible to raise its beams (see Rashi to Shemos 39:33). This is the meaning of the Gemara's statement (*Sotah* 9a) that "the work of Moshe's hands was never given over to the enemy." Since the *Mishkan* came into being through a miraculous act, the spiritual power invested in it remains forever and continues to accompany Klal Yisrael throughout all generations.

The *Mishkan* therefore endures eternally—not necessarily in its visible form, but in its enduring spiritual reality. Because its existence belongs to a plane beyond the natural order, its dedication appropriately lasted eight days, the number that signifies transcendence of nature.

The Beis Hamikdash, by contrast, despite the ten miracles manifested within it, existed more within the framework of the natural world. It was conquered by enemies, destroyed, rebuilt, and ultimately destroyed again. Its physical existence was therefore subject to the conditions of history, and accordingly its dedication lasted seven days, corresponding to the order of nature.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 29a) states: "Esther was the end of all the miracles. But what about Chanukah? We mean the last miracle that was written [into Tanach]."

Something that is written down becomes limited. Had the miracle of Chanukah been incorporated into Tanach, it would have assumed the fixed boundaries of the written text. Instead, Heaven willed that the light of Chanukah should continue to shine without limit or measure, like the *Mishkan* itself, whose sanctity endures forever. Thus, all eight days of Chanukah are days of *chinuch*.

This also explains why we commemorate specifically the dedication of the Beis Hamikdash in the days of the Chashmonaim, rather than Shlomo Hamelech's dedication. The miracle of Chanukah possesses the enduring quality of the *Mishkan*'s dedication; therefore, Chazal established it for all generations.

The Kli Chemdah offers a further explanation for why the Menorah had to be lit with pure oil on every night of Chanukah.

The Midrash[24] relates that Aharon Hakohen was distressed because neither he nor his tribe participated in the dedication offerings brought by the *Nesi'im*. Hashem comforted him, saying: "By your life, yours is greater than theirs, for you kindle and prepare the lamps every evening and morning."

How did the daily lighting of the Menorah console Aharon for not participating in the dedication of the *mizbe'ach*? The lighting of the Menorah is not parallel to the inaugural offerings of the *Nesi'im*.

24. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 15:6.

Moreover, why was he not consoled by what he himself offered each day—the *temidin, musafin* and *ketores*? Indeed, he himself officiated at the offerings of the *Nesi'im*.

The Ohr Hachaim explains this according to, in his view, the correct opinion in the Gemara (*Menachos* 88a) that the lamps of the Menorah were not permanently affixed in place. They were removed, cleaned, and prepared each day, then returned and arranged anew before being lit. Thus, every day's lighting was, in a sense, a new act of dedication.

This is what Hashem meant when He told Aharon, "Yours is greater than theirs." The dedication of the *mizbe'ach* took place only once. The service of the Menorah, however, was renewed daily; every lighting constituted a fresh act of *chinuch*.

On this basis, the Kli Chemdah explains that since the Menorah underwent a renewed dedication each day—in the second Beis Hamikdash—it is not sufficient that only the oil of the first night of Chanukah be pure. Every night's lighting requires pure oil, because each night represents a new dedication of the Menorah.

Ner Hashem nishmas adam—each morning, a person receives his soul renewed in purity. As we say upon awakening, *My God, the soul You have placed within me is pure*. The purity granted today is a new gift, one for which yesterday's accomplishments cannot suffice.

Lighting Neiros Chanukah from Stolen Oil[25]

It is said that in his younger years, the Divrei Shmuel of Slonim once went to watch his grandfather, the Yesod Haavodah, light the menorah on *erev Shabbos* Chanukah. The Divrei Shmuel had prepared his own menorah at home and planned to return and light it before Shabbos. Arriving home, he found that a guest had lit his menorah, and

25. *B'naos Deshe, Chanukah* 5781.

he did not have time before Shabbos to prepare more *neiros*. Keeping his calm, he said, "The same Hashem Who commanded us to light Chanukah candles also commanded us not to become angry." He thus greeted Shabbos joyously.

This story demonstrates great *avodas Hashem*. Nonetheless, we must analyze it as Torah.[26] Was this the proper course of action? After all, it would seem the guest did not fulfill his mitzvah, as *ner Chanukah* cannot be fulfilled with stolen oil.[27]

Why may *ner Chanukah* not be performed with stolen oil? First, based on the principle of *mitzvah habaah b'aveirah* (a mitzvah performed through an *aveirah*).[28] Second, *ner Chanukah* has a requirement of לְכֶם – *of yours*, just like *daled minim*, so that one must own the materials to fulfill the mitzvah.[29]

If, indeed, the guest did not fulfill the mitzvah, and thus the flames were not *neiros Chanukah*, it would seem the Divrei Shmuel should have extinguished them and relit the *neiros* himself. Presumably, there was plenty of oil left, since on *erev Shabbos* Chanukah one must prepare more oil than other nights.

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26. It has been pointed out that a different version of the story is recorded in *Ya'ir Ohr* of Rav Y. Schwartzman (p. 313), whereby the menorah was simply overturned. If so, our discussion is only theoretical.
27. See *She'eilos u'Teshuvos Shoel u'Meishiv, Telisa'i* 349, cited in *Mishnah Berurah* 673:2.
28. In our case, this may be explored from two angles: First, does *mitzvah habaah b'aveirah* apply to *mitzvos d'Rabbanan*? (See *Sdei Chemed*, vol. 4, *Maareches Mem*, 77:7; *She'eilos u'Teshuvos Eretz Tzvi, O.C.* 52.) Second, if a mitzvah is performed through an *aveirah* accidentally (as may have been the case here), does that invalidate the mitzvah? (See *Chasam Sofer, Sukkah* 30a; Maharam Schick, *O.C.* 295.) If we combine these two questions, it might constitute a *sfeik sfeika*, which means the guest fulfilled his mitzvah (at least in terms of *mitzvah habaah b'aveirah*).
29. See Ran, *Pesachim* 4a (*dapei haRif*); *Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham*, 679:1; *Sdei Chemed, Chanukah* 15; *Beis Yitzchak, Y.D.* end of 142.

Perhaps, with the guest's act of lighting the menorah, he caused the *neiros* to become *assur b'hanaah* (prohibited for benefit) as kindled *neiros Chanukah*, and through this *shinui* (change) to the oil, he acquired it. If so, it was considered the guest's oil, and he fulfilled the mitzvah with it. Thus, the Divrei Shmuel didn't extinguish the *neiros*.

Still, there is a rule that אֵין אָדָם אוֹסֵר דָּבָר שֶׁאֵינוֹ שֶׁלּוֹ – *a person cannot forbid something that doesn't belong to him*. So how could the guest make the oil *assur b'hanaah*, when it didn't belong to him beforehand?

We may suggest that this is, indeed, possible. The Rashba[30] writes that if a person steals an object and then declares it *hekdesh*, it is prohibited as *hekdesh*. It hadn't been his until then, but he acquired it by *shinui* through making it *hekdesh*, which, at the same time, enabled him to declare it *hekdesh* to start with (a concept known as *ba'in k'echad*[31]). The same can be said here: by lighting the *neiros* for the mitzvah, the guest effectuated a *shinui* of *issur hanaah*, which, at the same time, enabled his acquirement of the oil. He thus fulfilled the mitzvah.

Yet, although the guest created a *shinui* in the oil, he (presumably) didn't perform an act of *kinyan* on it, e.g., by lifting it up or placing it in his own property. So how could he acquire it?

Granted, Rav Akiva Eiger writes[32] that a thief can acquire an item through *shinui* alone, even without an act of *kinyan*, but that may not apply here. Rav Akiva Eiger says this where a physical change, e.g., *shechitah*, is made to the stolen object. In our case, the change is halachic—that the oil becomes prohibited through the mitzvah. And, as above, this halachic status is subject to the principle of *ba'in k'echad*. As we shall see, *ba'in k'echad* may not extend to enabling a new *kinyan gezeilah*.

30. *Gittin* 55b.
31. *Gittin* 77b.
32. *Kesubos* 34b.

The Acharonim explain[33] that in the above case of the Rashba, the thief had already performed an act of *kinyan* (such as lifting up) on the stolen item; only, his obligation to return it prevented his *kinyan* from taking effect. Thus, when he declares it *hekdesh*, the principle of *ba'in k'echad* allows this "prevention" to be bypassed, so that the acquisition is completed.

The Acharonim write that this is the only way *ba'in k'echad* works: it can bypass a "prevention" to a *kinyan*. It cannot, however, facilitate the creation of a new *kinyan*.

If so, even in accordance with Rav Akiva Eiger, the guest's use of stolen oil could not constitute a *kinyan gezeilah* in the absence of an actual act of *kinyan*, because *ba'in k'echad* cannot create a new *kinyan*. Accordingly, the guest did not acquire the oil, and did not fulfill his mitzvah. So why didn't the Divrei Shmuel extinguish and relight the menorah?

Perhaps the Divrei Shmuel was *mochel* the guest for his theft of the oil, and thus, the guest fulfilled his obligation. This seems counterintuitive, since the halachah is that הַדְּלָקָה עוֹשָׂה מִצְוָה – *the mitzvah is performed by the kindling*, at which time the oil didn't belong to the guest. However, one could argue that if a person possesses kindled *neiros* that he lit—even if at the time he lit them they were not his—he has fulfilled the mitzvah. If so, the Divrei Shmuel's *mechilah* of the guest's theft would enable the guest to fulfill his mitzvah.

But could the Divrei Shmuel grant his guest *mechilah*, at the expense of which he would be unable to fulfill his own mitzvah? Wouldn't his own responsibilities take precedence, in keeping with חַיֶּיךָ קוֹדְמִין – *your life takes precedence*?[34] We may suggest that since if he wouldn't grant *mechilah*, the guest's *berachah* on lighting the

33. See *Yalkut Shiurim, Kiddushin, Mahadura Basra*, 20:2, s.v. *omnam*.

34. See *Yalkut Shiurim, Sugyos* 16:7.

neiros would be considered *l'vatalah* (in vain), the Divrei Shmuel was permitted to be *mochel* him, so that his mitzvah would be deemed valid.

Lessons from the War

Establishing the Dates of Chanukah[35]

The Rambam writes:[36] "When Yisrael prevailed over their enemies and destroyed them, it was on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev." The *mefarshim* ask: Why was Chanukah established on the twenty-fifth? It would seemingly have been more appropriate to establish the festival on the twenty-sixth, after the enemy had been removed and the day of rest from the war had begun.

Rather, Chazal intentionally established the festival on the twenty-fifth. Had they waited until the twenty-sixth, one might have thought that the war was over and the enemy was no longer present. Yet this is not so. Perhaps they had won the minor war, but the greater war is constant. As the *Chovos Halevavos* writes,[37] a wise man encountered soldiers returning victorious from battle and said to them: "You have returned from the minor war, but the greater war still lies before you." What is the greater war? The battle against the *yetzer hara* and its forces—a war for Hashem against Amalek "from generation to generation." This war never ends, until we merit the *geulah*.

35. *Zos Chanukah* 5781.
36. *Hilchos Chanukah* 3:2.
37. *Shaar Yichud Hamaaseh* 5.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 21b) relates that they found only one vessel of oil with the seal of the Kohen Gadol, thus indicating its purity. The Rishonim ask (see Tosafos there): Why was there no concern that the Greeks may have moved the vessel without touching the oil, causing *tumas heset* (see *Taharos* 7:6; *Shabbos* 17b)?

The Ran[38] answers that there was no reason to suspect that they had moved it, for had they done so, they would have broken it open to see whether it contained gold or precious stones, since they would have seen the Kohen Gadol's seal. Rav Yeshayah Pik, the author of *Masores HaShas*, explains in his *Minei Targuma* that this is the Ran's intent in emphasizing that the vessel had the seal of the Kohen Gadol. Had it been sealed by an ordinary person, they might not have been eager to open it, for they did not have time to open every vessel (see *Kesubos* 27a). Precisely because it bore the seal of the Kohen Gadol, however, they should have been eager to open it and see whether it contained something precious. This was part of the greatness of the miracle.

Every Jew's *neshamah* is sealed with the seal of the King of the world. The enemies see the vessel and lie in wait to ensnare every Jewish soul. The *yetzer hara* employs every means at its disposal to entice a person and defile the seal of the King. Yet, we do not experience the miracle that occurred in the days of the Greeks. How, then, can we guard our *neshamah* from the *tumah* of *heset*?

The Rishonim write: The Torah refers to *heset* using a language of *negiah*, teaching that whatever cannot become *tamei* through contact cannot become *tamei* through *heset* (*Shabbos* 84b, Rashi, s.v. *v'din hu*).

Based on this, the Bach[39] explains that the opening of the vessel was narrow, so that one could not insert a finger into it. Since the oil

38. 9b, *dapei haRif.*
39. *O.C.* 670.

could not become *tamei* through contact while it remained inside the vessel, it could not become *tamei* through *heset* either. Nevertheless, the vessel also had to be sealed; otherwise, there would have been reason to suspect that some of the oil had been removed, rendered *tamei*, and then returned, or that it had become *tamei* through being under the same roof as a *meis*.

This is our counsel in the war against the *yetzer*. We live in this world, and it is impossible to hide the vessel of oil—the *nefesh* and *neshamah*—from the *yetzer hara*. The enemy knows that every Jew possesses a great treasure, sealed with the seal of the Holy King, and he seeks to steal it. But if we guard ourselves so that there is no possibility of contact, then the oil cannot become *tamei* through *heset*.

Such contact includes many things. The enemy is "full of eyes," as the Gemara states (*Avodah Zarah* 20b), and he lies in wait for a person at every turn, seeking ways to cause him to sin. He has many means through which to defile a person by contact. Only if we surround ourselves with a wall of *yiras Shamayim*, refusing to give him any possibility of contact, may we know that he has not moved our vessel of oil.

In fact, the entire festival of Chanukah relates to steadfastness—unlike Purim. On Purim, there are many possible days for the reading of the Megillah. Even a *paruz* or *mukaf ben yomo* reads the Megillah according to where he is on that day. Regarding Chanukah, however, the Gemara says, "They established them (קְבָעוּם) and made them days of praise and thanksgiving," and in *Al Hanissim* we say, "They established (וְקָבְעוּ) these eight days of Chanukah." This is the entire distinction of the one vessel of oil: it remained fixed in its place and was not moved. Perhaps this is why Chazal did not institute a second day of *sfeika d'yoma*.

From that steadfastness, the power of Chanukah has remained for all generations—to guard oneself from contact, so that the *yetzer hara* cannot move Jewish souls away from their bond with Hashem.

Rabbeinu Ephraim finds an allusion to Chanukah in the Torah. At the end of *Parshas Terumah* it is written (Shemos 27:19), וְכָל יִתְדֹת הֶחָצֵר נְחֹשֶׁת – *All the pegs of the courtyard shall be of copper*, and immediately afterward, at the beginning of *Parshas Tetzaveh*, the Torah speaks of kindling the lamps: לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד – *To cause a lamp to burn continually*.

The *roshei teivos* of נְחֹשֶׁת form *ner Chanukah, semol tadlik – the Chanukah lamp is lit on the left.* The *pasuk* is followed by the command concerning olive oil, as olive oil is the preferred manner of fulfilling the mitzvah.[40]

The beginning of the *pasuk* may also be expounded: "All the pegs of the courtyard." Rashi elaborates that the pegs were driven firmly into the ground so that the wind would not lift the curtains. Rashi cites proof from the *pasuk* (Yeshayahu 33:20), "A tent that shall not be moved; its pegs shall never be uprooted." That *pasuk* refers to Yerushalayim, the place of *yiras Shamayim*.

The pegs of the courtyard likewise allude to *yiras Shamayim*, as Chazal say in reference to *yiras Shamayim* (*Shabbos* 31b): "Woe to one who has no courtyard yet makes a gate for the courtyard." The peg thus represents the power through which a person remains firmly established in his place, complete in his *yirah*, despite the enticements of the *yetzer*.

As explained above, the miracle of Chanukah was that the *pach shemen* remained fixed in its place and was not moved. This *yesod* is also alluded to in the words of the Baraisa, יוֹמָא דְּחַנוּכָּה תְּמַנְיָא – *The days of Chanukah are eight*, whose initial letters spell *yased*—a peg. When a person possesses pure *yiras Shamayim*, he remains firmly established.

40. Cited by the Chida in *Chomas Anach*.