

Beis Yoseph (author of the Shulchan Aruch) asks a very simple question: Why are there eight days of Channukah if the *nes* of the oil was only seven days (there was enough oil to last one day)? There are two basic questions on this question. First, why did it take 1,700 years (from the incident of Channukah until the life of the Beis Yoseph) to ask this simple question? Second, the question is not really a question. How can Channukah only be seven days? Even if its celebration is only following the miracle of the menorah, the menorah lit for eight days. Of course the holiday must include the first day. The *chag* should last as long as the lights lasted, especially if that is the basis of the celebration. It makes no sense to knock off the first day.

To understand the question, and why Beis Yoseph asked it, go back to the Gemara. Gemara Shabbos 21b says, *what is Channukah?* Before asking this question, it discusses a half-page's worth of how to light the chanukiah. Then the Gemara digresses, since it is discussing how to light, it asks, *what is Channukah? Chazal taught that on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the days of Channukah are eight. One may not eulogize on them and one may not fast on them. What is the reason? When the Greeks entered the Mikdash they defiled all the oils that were in the Beis HaMikdash by touching them. And when the Chashmonean monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that was placed with the seal of the Kohen Gadol, undisturbed by the Greeks. And there was sufficient oil there to light the menorah for only one day. A miracle occurred and they lit the menorah from it for eight days. The next year Chazal instituted those days and made them holidays with recitation of Hallel and special thanksgiving in prayer (Al Hanisim) and blessings.*

This is strange. The answer to "What is Channukah" is the laws about not eulogizing on it? Only then does it revert back to the miracle of the oil? Further, from the explanation of the Gemara, Beis Yoseph's question is even more a non-question. The Gemara explains that the menorah was rededicated and it lit for eight days and the celebration is on that anniversary. It is obvious that the commemorative celebration would be for all eight days the menorah lasted. It would make no sense to start Channukah on the 26th of Kislev, day two of the rededication anniversary.

Really, Beis Yoseph is asking a different question. As the Gemara said, the Greeks defiled the Beis HaMikdash and it took a miracle – the Chashmonean victory – to oust them so that the Beis HaMikdash could be rededicated. However, that seems to be incidental. The main emphasis is on the *nes* of the light lasting eight days. Beis Yoseph is asking: which is it? The miracle of the war or lights? Without the war there is no oil and there is no lights lasting eight days. Yet, without the rededication of the Beis HaMikdash and the service of the menorah what was the point of the war?

Why is Channukah eight days when the lights only lasted seven days? The question really is *how does the chag being eight days celebrate the proper meaning of Channukah?*

Without the rededication of the Mikdash and the service of the menorah there is no point in the victory. There is no point in living in the Land without the kedusha of the avodah. Therefore, if the point is to celebrate the miracle of the war, that can be one day – V Day. If the point is to celebrate the miracle of the menorah, that was only a seven-day miracle. What is the eight days? It is a combination of celebrating both because both miracles were necessary to have a meaningful event. Both the war and the menorah lasting eight days were integral parts.

Beis Yoseph asked the question because he was implying that the true celebration of Channukah (and any Jewish historical event) is only truly achieved through the *halachos*. Proper lighting of a chanukiah, saying the proper Hallel and brachos, are all necessary to accomplish appropriate celebration. This lesson is paramount in *galus*. Torah and its observance are vital and the fundamental part of any holiday or celebration. Through life it is the Torah observance and following the Rabbinical decrees that keeps the Jewish people's survival important and significant.

Have a meaningful remainder of Channukah.