

O H R N E T

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The Hidden Light

BY RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

What is so special about the mitzvah of Chanuka lights? This is the question that arises when we read the words of Rambam (Laws of Chanuka 4:12):

“The mitzvah of Chanuka is a very beloved mitzvah.”

This extraordinary title for a mitzvah, one not assigned to any other mitzvah, calls for an examination of the special nature of this command.

The answer lies in the mystical concept of *Ohr Haganuz*:

When G-d created the world and said, “Let there be light”, the illumination that resulted was not what we see today. This was a light, say our Sages, which enabled one “to see from one end of the world to another.”

What happened to this light is explained in the *gemara* (*Mesechta Chagigah* 12b) quoted by Rashi in *Parshat Bereishet* (1:4):

“G-d saw that the wicked were unworthy of enjoying it and therefore set it aside for the use of the righteous in the World to Come.”

Where did the Creator store this *Ohr Haganuz* hidden light in the meantime?

Our sacred commentaries have suggested that the *Ohr Haganuz* was stored in the words of the Torah. When one learns Torah he gains some of that world-spanning perspec-

tive provided by this magical light.

There is also a tradition that the *Ohr Haganuz* was stored in the lights kindled by Jews on Chanuka. The 36 lights of the eight days of Chanuka correspond to the 36 hours of the primeval light before it was set aside.

This explains the custom of spending some time looking at the Chanuka lights so as to gain a tiny glimpse of the hidden light which they reflect.

What can we hope to gain from such a virtual reconnection to a light which enabled one to see from one end of the world to another?

Chanuka brings together thousands of miles of the universe and thousands of years of history. It celebrates the end of the Hellenist exile, the third of the four exiles our people have experienced at the hands of four different superpowers. Exile, and the suffering that goes with it, can challenge one’s faith. But when one looks at those Chanuka lights, and sings the “Maoz Tzur” song about miraculous survival in all of those exiles, he sees the world – time and place – from one end to another and gains an understanding of the Divine design for the destiny of His beloved people.

May we merit to see the hidden light within the lights of Chanuka and enjoy a glimpse of the World to Come.

*The Ohr Somayach Family wishes
you and yours a Happy Chanuka*

DO YOU WANT TO HEAR A GOOD STORY?

“Seven years of famine...” (41:27)

If you examine most classic Torah insights, they often start with an anomaly in a verse, be it in the spelling, the grammar, or the sequence of the words, and based on this anomaly the writer will draw a homiletic interpretation. And then he will write, “To what may this be compared?”, and finish with a parable to illustrate the point.

I have had the merit, thank G-d, to write these insights on the weekly Torah reading for nearly twenty years. Early on in my career I made a discovery that I would like to share with you.

My feeling is that nowadays many readers are resistant to inferences based on textual anomaly—but everyone wants to hear a good story. So very simply, I reversed the classic structure, starting with the story and finishing with the textual analysis.

The great spiritual master Rava would always begin a deep Torah discourse by telling a joke. Why? As soon as the *yetzer hara* notices someone getting up to speak *divrei Torah*, it sends a powerful sedative to the brain.

Rava knew that to grab the attention of his listeners he would have to outflank the *yetzer hara*.

You can’t get people to listen to you unless you can first grab their attention.

My intention was the same as Rava’s, the same as any teacher – to grab the attention of the audience before they hit the delete button.

So having told you the story, here’s the anomaly:

In this week’s Torah portion, when Yosef interprets Pharaoh’s dream, he starts off by first telling him about the seven years of famine. Chronologically, the seven years of plenty came first.

Why didn’t Yosef start by talking about them?

In a country as prosperous as Egypt, talking about seven years of plenty would have been about as interesting as watching wallpaper. Yosef deliberately started with the years of famine because he knew that such a cataclysmic disaster would be sure to make Pharaoh sit up and take notice of his advice.

In communicating your ideas to people, you must first gain their attention. Without that, the best arguments will fall on deaf ears.

• Source: Ramban

PARSHA OVERVIEW

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh’s wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef’s ex-master’s daughter, as Yosef’s wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an Egyptian overlord and

acts harshly, accusing them of being spies. Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey, they discover the money and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable, he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin’s safety, and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks, and to put his goblet inside Binyamin’s sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin become his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

A Chip Off the Old Block

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475–1564), commonly known as Michelangelo, was arguably the greatest sculptor who ever lived.

When asked how he made his most famous statue of King David, he is reported to have said, “It’s easy. You just chip away all the stone that doesn’t look like David.”

If Michelangelo understood that the perfect physical image of man must escape the marble that encases it, he should have had no problem understanding that the perfect spiritual image of man needs to escape the flesh that encases it.

To Michelangelo the mitzvah of Brit Mila should have been a no-brainer.

I doubt it.

To the Greek mind, which formed the underpinnings of the Michelangelo’s Renaissance Weltanschauung, the human body is perfect, and to subtract from it is the worst form of aesthetic crime.

But beneath the aesthetic protests of the Greeks and the Neo-Greeks, there is a more sinister agenda. It was not by coincidence that among the events that lead up to Chanuka, Antiochus banned *brit mila*.

In every generation the voice of anti-Semitism always starts with the most reasonable of accusations, namely: “Cruelty to Animals” and “Cruelty to Young Children” (and probably in that order).

In other words, Jew-hatred starts by attacking *shechita* and *brit mila*.

Many countries in Europe are standing by waiting to see whether a bill against *shechita* which has already passed the Lower House of the Dutch Government will pass into law. If this bill does become law, *shechita* will be illegal in Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Swiss animal rights groups and far-right politicians have already called for a ban on imported kosher meat.

And a virulently anti-Semitic comic has appeared on the West Coast of America characterizing a *mohel* as a sinister ‘Doctor Doom’, as bloodthirsty as any a Marvel Comic vil-

lain. This comic is just one symptom of a rising backlash against *brit mila*. One anti-circumcision group in San Francisco succeeded in getting to ballot a measure which would prohibit circumcision among males under the age of 18 with a penalty for infringement of a fine of up to \$1,000 or up to one year in jail.

The attack on *shechita* views animals as humans, and the attack on *mila* views humans as splendid animals, free to indulge their every whim and desire.

The freedom to indulge is the true agenda of the ‘Greeks’ in every generation.

There’s a fascinating confrontation between Rabbi Akiva and the Roman General Turnus Rufus described in the Rabbinic literature. (*Midrash Tanchuma, Tazria 7:7*):

“Turnus Rufus asks Rabbi Akiva, ‘Whose actions are better, those of G-d or flesh and blood?’ Rabbi Akiva replies, ‘Those of flesh and blood.’

“...Asks Turnus Rufus, ‘Why are you circumcised?’ ‘I thought you would ask me that,’ replies Rabbi Akiva, ‘and for that reason I pre-empted your question and told you that the actions of flesh and blood are better... Take wheat and cake for example. G-d creates wheat and man creates cake. Or flax and clothing. G-d creates flax and man creates clothes. Are not the latter better?’

“Turnus Rufus replies, ‘If G-d wants man to be circumcised, why doesn’t he emerge from his mother’s belly thus?’ Says Rabbi Akiva, ‘I could ask you too why the placenta emerges with the baby and isn’t severed before the baby emerges?’

“ ‘The reason that a baby boy doesn’t come circumcised into this world is because the Holy One gave the *mitzvot* to the Jewish People solely to connect to Him’.”

The mitzvah of *brit mila* reminds us that man is created imperfect but with all the potential to raise himself to holiness and closeness to the Creator – to free himself from constraints of the physical and embrace his spiritual destiny.

Man too is no more than a block of marble waiting to be turned into a work of art.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What did the fat cows being eaten symbolize?
2. How did Pharaoh's recollection of his dream differ from Nevuchadnetzar's recollection of his dream?
3. What was significant about the fact that Pharaoh dreamed repeatedly?
4. What does "Tsafnat Panayach" mean?
5. What happened to the Egyptians' grain that was stored in anticipation of the famine?
6. What did Yosef require the Egyptians to do before he would sell them grain?
7. Did Yaakov and his family still have food when he sent his sons to Egypt? If yes, why did he send them?
8. What prophetic significance lay in Yaakov's choice of the word "redu" — "descend" (and not "lechu" — "go")?
9. Why does the verse say "Yosef's brothers" went down to Egypt (and not "Yaakov's sons")?
10. When did Yosef know that his dreams were being fulfilled?
11. Under what pretext did Yosef accuse his brothers of being spies?
12. Why did the brothers enter the city through different gates?
13. Who was the interpreter between Yosef and his brothers?
14. Why did Yosef specifically choose Shimon to put in prison?
15. How does the verse indicate that Shimon was released from prison after his brothers left?
16. What was Yaakov implying when he said to his sons: "I am the one whom you bereaved."?
17. How did Reuven try to persuade Yaakov to send Binyamin to Egypt?
18. How long did it take for Yaakov and family to eat all the food that the brothers brought back from Egypt? Give the answer in terms of travel time.
19. How much more money did the brothers bring on their second journey than they brought on the first journey? Why?
20. How did the brothers defend themselves against the accusation of theft?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 41:4 - That all the joy of the plentiful years would be forgotten. (Not that the good years would provide food for the bad years.)
2. 41:8 - Pharaoh remembered the contents of his dream but didn't know its meaning. Nevuchadnetzar forgot even the contents of his dream.
3. 41:32 - It showed that the seven good years would start immediately.
4. 41:45 - He who explains things that are hidden and obscure.
5. 41:55 - It rotted.
6. 41:55 - Become circumcised.
7. 42:1 - Yes, but he sent them because he did not want to cause envy in the eyes of those who did not have food.
8. 42:2 - It hinted to the 210 years that the Jewish people would be in Egypt: The word "redu" has the numerical value of 210.
9. 42:3 - Because they regretted selling Yosef and planned to act as brothers by trying to find him and ransom him at any cost.
10. 42:9 - When his brothers bowed to him.
11. 42:12 - They entered the city through 10 gates rather than through one gate.
12. 42:13 - To search for Yosef throughout the city.
13. 42:23 - His son Menashe.
14. 42:24 - Because he was the one who cast Yosef into the pit and the one who said, "Here comes the dreamer." Alternatively, to separate him from Levi, as together they posed a danger to him.
15. 42:24 - The verse says Shimon was bound "in front of their eyes," implying that he was bound only while in their sight.
16. 42:36 - That he suspected them of having slain or sold Shimon, and that they may have done the same to Yosef.
17. 42:37 - He said, "Kill my two sons if I fail to bring back Binyamin."
18. 43:2,10 - Twice the travel time to and from Egypt.
19. 43:12 - Three times as much, in order to repay the money they found in their sacks and to buy more even if the price had doubled.
20. 44:8 - They said, "We returned the money we found in our sacks; can it be that we would steal?"

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- Facial flaws that disqualify an animal for sacrifice
- Other flaws in various parts of the body
- Left-footedness and lanky tallness
- Flaws which apply to animals but not to humans
- The status of *bechor* for inheriting a double portion and for requiring redemption
- How much of the child must leave the womb for it to constitute birth
- The status of children of a convert who were born before his conversion
- What sort of miscarriage affects the status of the firstborn that follows
- Redemption of firstborn twins
- When two wives give birth to firstborns
- When either the *bechor* or the father die within 30 days from birth
- What currency is involved in redemption of *bechor* and payment of certain penalties
- Whose mitzvah of *pidyon* takes precedence – father or son

THE UNEXPECTED FLAWS

“Starting off on the left foot” is an expression in many cultures of getting off to a bad start. This apparently refers to one who is naturally right-footed but leads with the wrong foot. But what about someone who is naturally left-footed?

If it is a *kohen* who is left-footed he is disqualified from performing the service in the *Beit Hamikdash* since left-footedness is considered a physical flaw just as is left-handedness.

In his commentary Rashi explains that since the Torah refers to the *kohen's* role in the sacrificial service as “to stand and serve” this indicates that he must be capable of using his right foot for the main support in his standing like the majority of *kohanim*.

Another interesting example of a physical flaw which disqualifies a *kohen* is height! A *kohen* who is unusually tall and very thin is disqualified because his height is so disproportionate to his weight that he presents a most unattractive figure.

• *Bechorot* 45b

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“A convert has not fulfilled the command to have children with those born before his conversion because a convert is considered as a newborn child.”

• *Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish* (*The halacha, however, is like Rabbi Yochanan that he has indeed fulfilled the commandment.*)

Bechorot 47a

NEW
FEATURE!

@ OHR Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students

Rabbi Yonason Goldson

Los Angeles - University of California

Ohr LaGolah Graduate; author of Dawn to Destiny (Judaica Press), a philosophic overview of Tanach through the Talmudic era.

“I grew up in Los Angeles with no bar mitzvah, no aleph-beit, and ate ham sandwiches on Passover and Yom Kippur.”

Then, in November '83, with only a backpack and an English degree from the University of California, Yonason Goldson began hitchhiking across the USA and Europe. He arrived in Israel to pick oranges, but the kibbutzim were full and he was broke.

So he went to Ohr Somayach.

“Jeff Seidel sent me. It took Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb two



months to convince me that Torah was from Sinai,” says Rabbi Goldson.

Nine years after learning alef-beit, he completed Ohr Lagolah's semicha program and moved with his wife and two kids to Budapest, Hungary for their “initiation by fire into the world of chinuch and kiruv”.

“Two generations of Soviet-style socialism had begotten a culture lacking any moral compass, much less a sensitivity to Torah and *mitzvot*. In contrast, the moral equivalence and political correctness in America has proven a less dramatic but far more subtle challenge.”

Today, Rabbi Goldson teaches at the Block Yeshiva High in Missouri.

“Rabbi Ephraim Oratz of Ohr Lagolah sparked in me a passion for teaching.”

CHANUKA MENORAH

From: Glenda

Dear Rabbi,

Could you please comment on the relationship between the Menorah of the Temple and the menorah of Chanuka? I know there are differences, but I can't help from feeling there are similarities as well.

Dear Glenda,

One of the reasons that the Chanuka menorah is so beloved is that it is a memorial and symbol of the Menorah in the Holy Temple. Even though it has eight lights instead of seven, of course, it recalls the miracle associated with the lighting of the Menorah during the re-inauguration of the Temple service after having been defiled by the ancient Greeks. In fact, we currently have no physical memorial of any other service in the Sanctuary.

Our Sages taught that the lights of the Menorah in the Sanctuary outweighed in importance all the sacrificial offerings. What is the greatness of these lights? They are a testimonial to the People of Israel that all the light and rejoicing that are theirs, come to them only from the light shed upon them by G-d. And even if this light seems small, and the light

enjoyed by the nations seem exceedingly large, Israel nevertheless desires only the light shed upon them by G-d, and no other light.

The eyes of Israel are therefore lifted to the Holy Temple, from which light emits to illuminate their world. Interestingly, the windows of the Temple were made "wide from within and narrow from without" so that the light from the Menorah would radiate out from the Sanctuary, and not into the Sanctuary from outside. We are taught thereby that the Sanctuary was not in need of light coming from without, but rather the whole world was illuminated by the light that emanates from it.

If so, the Menorah was not intended to cast light within the Temple, but rather to radiate light into the lives and souls of the Jewish People. One of the ways in which the Menorah is considered greater than the sacrifices is that it continues to shine into our lives through the Chanuka lights even after the destruction of the Temple when we no longer have the Temple service. Therefore, as in times of old, we are to focus our attention and concentrate on the small but increasing light emanating from the Chanuka menorah which serves as a window through which we are given a glimpse of the light that G-d radiates upon us and which will ultimately shine with the brilliance of our final redemption.

ISRAEL Forever

THE UNSUNG HEROES

“In the days of Matityahu... and his sons” is the way in which we begin our special prayer of thanks on Chanukah which encapsulates the great miracle that took place thousands of years ago at this time of the year. When we mention in this prayer that with Heavenly help “the many were delivered into the hands of the few” we automatically conjure up the image of Yehuda Macabee and the other heroes who waged war against the mighty Greek army.

But we must not forget the unsung heroes of the Greek exile – those Jews who suffered torture and death as they defied the enemy’s ban on religious practice. We must honor their memory by reading and relating to our chil-

dren the accounts of their self-sacrifice in remaining faithful to their G-d.

We must not make the mistake of members of the public who idolize those who actively resisted the Nazis and neglect to pay tribute to those Jews in the death camps who risked their lives in order to perform *mitzvot* to the best of their ability.

It is the failure of Yad Vashem and other Holocaust memorial bodies to pay such tribute which has been criticized by observant Jews as an insult to the heroism of those who kept Judaism alive. Only by appreciating their heroism and emulating their self-sacrifice can we be worthy of enjoying Israel forever.

HUNTER AND HUNTED

Question: Some friends have invited me to join them on a safari to Africa which will include hunting wild animals. Is hunting proper for a nice Jewish boy?

Answer: This question was put to the rabbi of Prague, Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, over two centuries ago. His answer, as it appears in *Responsa Noda B'Yehuda*, rejects the idea of hunting on cultural, ethical and halachic grounds.

“Who are the hunters mentioned in the Torah?”, he asks rhetorically. Nimrod and Esav, the two individuals identified as hunters, were also the personification of rebellion against Heaven and cruelty towards man. Hardly models for a nice Jewish boy!

He also calls attention to the Jewish custom of wishing someone who wears a new article of clothing that he live to see it wear out and be replaced by another (“*tibaleh vetitchadesh*”). This blessing is withheld, however, in regard to items made of leather, such as shoes, because it implies

the death of an animal to make such renewal possible. If such compassion for animals is expected of us in the blessing we offer, he concludes, how much more so in regard to refraining from slaying them simply for the sake of pleasure.

After stating these reasons based on *mussar* (ethics) the author issues his ruling that hunting is forbidden because of the risk it presents to the hunter. (“Just as the hunter is out to kill his prey, the animal is out to kill the hunter.”) If someone hunts for his livelihood he is permitted to expose himself to this level of risk just as the Torah permitted one to climb high fruit trees, cross oceans and travel deserts for his livelihood despite the fact that each of these carries with it a degree of risk. But if hunting is done simply as a form of sport one is guilty of exposing himself unnecessarily to such a degree of risk, and therefore violates the Torah command to guard against danger to life, a sin that makes his situation even more precarious.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A MONUMENT TO CARING

“I feel so terrible that I can’t sleep at night,” cried the widow to Rabbi Aviezri Auerbach, the rav of the Jewish community in Halberstat, Germany. “Not only did I lose my husband but I couldn’t afford to put a marble monument on his grave and had to settle for a simple gravel one.”

The rabbi thought for a moment how he could comfort this broken widow so upset at not having properly honored her husband. In a flash of inspiration he took a sheet of his rabbinical stationery and wrote on it a Will instructing his

children to place on his own grave after his death a monument made of gravel and not of marble. He then read this document to the heartsick widow and thus assured her that her husband’s memory would suffer no dishonor.

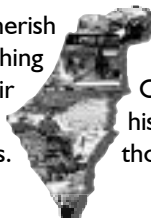
The rabbi’s instructions were faithfully followed when he passed away. When the residents of the city, Jews and non-Jews alike, expressed wonder at seeing such a simple monument atop the grave of such an illustrious spiritual leader, they learned what a Torah leader was ready to do to comfort a widow.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

THE DEAR AND CHERISHED LAND

“For Your servants hold dear her stones and cherish even her dust.” (*Tehillim 102:15*) The touching scene of Jews kissing the earth upon their arrival in Eretz Yisrael has its roots in the words of King David and in the actions of our Talmudic Sages.



Rabbi Abba kissed the rocks at the port of Acco. Rabbi Chiya bar Gamda rolled in the dust of the land. Rabbi Chanina went even further by repairing the roads so that his beloved country would not have a bad reputation with those who traveled upon them. (*Ketuvot 112*)

The Miracle(s) of Chanuka

BY RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

We all know that the reason we celebrate Chanuka is to commemorate and thank G-d all of the *Nissim* – miracles – that He performed for our ancestors upon saving them from the Greeks and their harsh decrees.

Firstly, for the miraculous and crushing defeat of the mighty Greek army at the hands of the Maccabees, a small army of religious Jews led by Yehuda HaMaccabee and his father Mattityahu. Secondly, for the miracle of the Menorah.

When the Maccabees returned victorious to the Beit Hamikdash, they found it completely defiled by the Greeks. After much searching they managed to find a small jar of pure, untouched olive oil with the seal of the *Kohen Hagadol* still intact. This jar contained enough oil to last for only one day. However, as we know, it burned for eight straight days. Because of these miracles, the Sages established the holiday of Chanuka, in order to thank G-d.

The Gemara in Shabbat (21b) famously asks “*Mai Chanuka*”? In commemoration of which of these miracles did the Sages institute Chanuka?

The Gemara answers, “For the miracle of the oil.” The fact that the oil should have only burned for one day, and instead burned for eight, was the reason why the Sages instituted the festival of Chanuka.

However, during Chanuka there is an additional prayer, called *Al Hanissim*, which is inserted into the Grace after Meals as well as in the *Shemona Esrei* daily prayers. In this prayer we thank G-d for the miracles of Chanuka. Yet, in it, there is only mention of the miracle of the war, how G-d “placed the mighty in the hands of the weak and the many in the hands of the few”.

Nowhere in this *Al Hanissim* prayer does it mention the miracle of the oil. This is quite peculiar because the Gemara (cited above) states that the holiday of Chanuka was instituted exclusively because of the miracle of the oil! How could this be? The Gemara and *Al Hanissim* seem to be at odds with each other!

It is well known that miracles take on different forms. There are different categories of miracles. One type of miracle shows the greatness and strength of G-d and at the same time is a salvation for the Jews. One such miracle was the splitting of the Red Sea, where G-d saved the Jewish people from the wicked Egyptians in a public manner, by utterly decimating their army.

Another example is the miracle of the mighty Greeks’ defeat at the hands of the Maccabees. For miracles such as

these, we are required to say *Shira*, a song of praise and thanksgiving to G-d. We therefore say ‘*Az Yashir*’ every day in *davening* to thank G-d for splitting the Red Sea and for saving our ancestors from the bloodthirsty Egyptians. Likewise, the Sages instituted the *Al Hanissim* prayer on Chanuka to thank Him for His salvation from the Greeks.

Another form of a miracle is when G-d reveals Himself to us through a miracle to show that He is pleased that we are doing His will properly. It also is a symbol of His relationship to us, so that we should draw even closer to Him by performing His *mitzvot* (commandments).

Such was the miracle of the oil. Instead of just lighting the Menorah with any oil, the Maccabees searched until they found an untouched jar of pure oil. Only with this special jar did they light the Menorah. In return, to show how pleased He was with their diligence, G-d performed an open miracle and made the oil last for eight days instead of one, in order that the Jews would realize their intimacy to God and draw even closer to Him.

Based upon this explanation, there really is no inconsistency. The Gemara in Shabbat asks: “To commemorate which miracle did the Sages establish the holiday of Chanuka?” The Gemara answered: “The miracle of the oil.” Because of the efforts of the Jews to ensure the purity of the oil, G-d, in return, manifested his Divine pleasure through a miracle – the miracle of the oil.

To commemorate this, the Sages instituted the eight days of Chanuka to draw us ever closer to G-d.

However, *Al Hanissim* is the *Shira*, the prayer of thanksgiving and praise to G-d instituted for saving us from the Greeks; and we only say *Shira* for a miracle that publicly showed that through the might of G-d, the Jews were saved. That was only the miracle of war, not the miracle of the oil.

That is why we only mention that specific miracle in *Al Hanissim*.

In any case, we must thank G-d for *all* the miracles, and therefore we celebrate the eight days of Chanuka, *l’hodot u’lhallel*. It is apropos that the holiday of Chanuka generally falls out during the doldrums of winter and lights up the darkness. It behooves us all to glean from this enlightening holiday a small spark of “thanksgiving and gratitude”, and reflect about the miracles in our daily lives.