

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn

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NOT CONFINED TO RATIONALISM

Chanukah, the *Gemara* tells us, is a celebration of the discovery of a single jug of oil which ultimately burned miraculously for eight days, after the Greeks had rendered all other oil impure, presumably with the intent of bringing the *avoda* to a halt. Yet their actions are somewhat perplexing, since the more reasonable thing from their perspective would have been to simply pour the oil out. Attempting instead to create halachic problems was of dubious usefulness, since it still may have been permissible to use the oil in its impure state.

RATIONAL SUBMISSION

In truth, however, their goal was "*I'hashkicham torasecha*," to wage war against *Torah*, specifically targeting its spiritual component. The *Rebbe Rayatz* famously stressed that the Greeks were not offended by the *Torah* as an intellectual pursuit or by *mitzvos* as sensible instructions, but rather by "*torasecha*," the notion that the *Torah* was divine, and by "*chukei retzonecha*," obeying *Hashem's* suprarational Will.

The *Rebbe* adds that even *chukim* were deemed acceptable by

the *Yevanim*, and they only objected to "*chukei retzonecha*." This is because there are rational grounds for observing commands for which we know no explanation. If a child has received consistently sound guidance from a superior in the past, and he is then faced with advice which he cannot comprehend, he will conclude, if he is sufficiently precocious, that the logical thing

to do is to consider the track record and the limits of his own intellect, and obey. Likewise, even the laws of *para aduma* can be practiced on a rational basis in view of the fact that *Hashem* and the *Torah* are so great, and we should expect not to grasp everything.

UNADULTERATED FAITH

The Greeks, the then champions of rationality, were similarly comfortable with *mitzvos* which possess a logical foundation, or even with observing *chukim* on the grounds that some things are beyond our purview, but they were very disturbed by the desire to simply act on *Hashem's* Will,

and took offense at the notion that spirituality and holiness are latent within *Torah* and *mitzvos*.

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They therefore deliberately took action to render the oil in the *beis ha'mikdash* impure, as if to say: If the Jews wish to kindle the *menorah*, to illuminate the world with their wisdom, we'll allow it, even if we believe our intellectual tradition to be superior, but to do so with 'pure' oil? To suggest that holiness is a factor? The concept of the divine is anathema to us! The aim therefore wasn't to pour the oil out and make lighting the menorah impossible, but rather to extinguish its holiness.

It was this assault which triggered the Jewish response of *mesiras nefesh*, expressing our unadulterated faith in Hashem's Will, "*chukei retzonecha*," and this is the significance of the discovery of the jug of oil with the seal of the *Kohen Gadol* which represents the Jewish core which had been awakened. But what was truly miraculous was that it burned for eight days – the Jewish essence was channeled through the intellectual and emotional faculties into practicality.

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is otherwise disconnected from this reality. The ultimate accomplishment is for the *aleph* to permeate the *zayin*, which is what happened when the jug of oil associated with *mesiras nefesh* burned for an additional seven days.

This is incidentally akin to what was discussed last week about how the *Alter Rebbe* succeeded in channeling 'a great G-d inside a small book,' because fitting the *emuna* introduced by the *Baal Shem Tov* into a *Chabad* framework is an excellent example of bringing the *aleph* within the *zayin*.

For further learning see ד"ה ת"ר מצות נר חנוכה תשל"ח.

EXTENDING THE ONE TO SEVEN MORE

The *Midrash* comments regarding "*az yashir*" that "*az*" is comprised of *aleph*, one, and *zayin*, seven, and the *aleph* 'rides' upon the *zayin*. Seven represents worldliness, as exemplified in the pattern of seven which repeats itself throughout the universe, while one represents *Hashem's* presence. The *aleph* alone is representative of a Jew who is roused to *mesiras nefesh* when challenged or who is inspired on *Yom Kippur*, but whose daily life

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