

VINEGAR, ANYONE?

PARSHAS MIKETZ, SHABBOS CHANUKAH

The **Talmud** (Ta'anis 25A) relates that one Friday evening, the great sage, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, saw that his daughter was sad. When he questioned her, she responded that in error she lit the Shabbos candles with vinegar instead of with oil. Therefore, the candles would soon burn out, leaving them in the dark. Rabbi Chanina told her that she didn't have to be concerned. *"Hashem Who instructed the oil to burn, can also say that the vinegar should burn."* The **Talmud** relates that those candles burned the entire Shabbos until it was time for havdalah.

The Bombardier beetle has a defense mechanism against its enemies. It shoots a hot noxious chemical spray from the tip of its abdomen. The spray is produced from a reaction between two chemical compounds which are stored in two protective chambers in the beetle's [abdomen](#). If those compounds were together, in one chamber, the beetle would explode! When disturbed or attacked, the beetle produces an internal chemical reaction in its abdomen. The chemicals are combined and heated up almost to a boiling point. The hot, noxious chemicals are then shot at a predator at the rate of 500 pulses per second! The burning liquid is emitted in pulses rather than in one continuous spray to allow a split-second cooling between each pulse. Otherwise, the beetle would burn itself to death from the intense heat.

Rabbeinu Yona (on the **Rif** at the end of the 4th chapter of **Talmud Brachos**) says that although Hashem is not visible, we can "see" Hashem by witnessing the wonders He creates and the manifestations of His might.

The **Alter of Kelm**- The verse in **Navi Yeshaya** (45:15) states, *"Indeed, you are a G-d who conceals Himself, the G-d of Israel, the Savior."* This means that even though Hashem is hidden from our eyes, as we cannot see him, He is still the G-d of Israel, for

whom He performs countless wonders. He is our Savior. Through the acts of salvation performed for us, we, mankind, can "see" Hashem. He is revealed to us, and we are cognizant of his presence.

In a similar vein, the **Alter** explains the pasuk from **Tehillim** (116:1) which we say in Hallel, *"I love the Lord who hears my voice and my supplications."* Generally, if one was saved from a difficult situation, he would say that it would have been better had the difficulty not presented itself in the first place. King David had the opposite approach, as manifest from this pasuk in **Tehillim**. King David preferred that the difficulty come. Then he could daven to Hashem for salvation. When he would merit Hashem's salvation, then he would recognize Hashem's greatness even more.

Similarly, the **Ramban** (end of parshas Bo) says that when we see Hashem's wonders, it helps us realize that even the so called "natural" events that we see daily are also manifestations of Hashem's greatness.

Rabbi Yosef Caro in his commentary **Beis Yosef** (Ohr Hachaim 670) poses a glaring question regarding the holiday of Chanukah. The oil in the menorah miraculously lasted for 8 days. However, there was enough oil in the jug to last for one day. In that case, the first day that the oil burned was NOT a miracle.

The miraculous part was the oil lasting for the next seven days. Shouldn't Chanukah, which celebrates the miracle of the oil, be celebrated for just seven days instead of 8? Many commentators have proposed various answers to this question. **Rav Yosef Caro** says that they divided one night's oil into eight portions. Miraculously, each portion lasted an entire night. **HaMeiri** in Lehodos U'lehallel says that the Greeks ransacked the Temple many days in search of oil to defile. Despite that, they overlooked one jug. The first day celebrates the miracle of the finding of a jug of pure oil. **Chidushei HaRim** says that they made the wicks one-eighth of the normal thickness. Nevertheless, the flames burned just as brightly as if the wicks had been the normal thickness. **Kedushas Levi** says that the first day commemorates the military victory. It was a miracle that a few weak Jewish soldiers defeated the mighty Greek legions.

Another answer that is given is that the mere fact that oil burns, is a miracle. We don't view it as a miracle and are not astounded by it because we see

it all the time. Therefore, it does not lead us to recognize the Creator. However, when we see something unusual, such that the oil lasted for 8 days, then we can recognize Hashem. Through the miracle that occurred for seven days, everyone was vividly reminded that it was Hashem who miraculously allowed oil to burn in the first place!

The **Alter** says that familiarity and habit blind us. Those happenings, however miraculous, that occur daily, lose their emotional impact. We fail to recognize that nature is only nature because Hashem made it nature. The occurrence of the out of the ordinary event is what causes us to stand up and take notice. It has the effect of not only causing us to appreciate Hashem's hand in the outright miracle, but also enables us to appreciate the miraculous nature of nature. Seeing oil burn for seven days longer than it should, not only brought about an appreciation for this apparent miracle, but also for Hashem's hand in everyday life as well.

(Based on Yalkut Lekach Tov by Yakkov Yisroel Beifus)

Everything that occurs is from Hashem. Hashem hides behind "nature". Being aware of obvious miracles helps us realize that even the daily occurrences that we constantly see are also miracles.

That knowledge will bring us closer to Hashem.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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