8 Answers to the Question:

"Why is Chanukah 8 Days?"

compiled by Rabbi Reuven Subar

The Chanukah miracle: A flask with one night’s oil burned for 8 nights. But since there was oil for one night, the miracle actually lasted only 7 nights. So why is Chanukah 8 nights?

Here are 8 approaches to answer this question:

1. They divided one night’s oil into eight portions. Miraculously, each portion lasted an entire night.
   Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 670

2. The Greeks ransacked the Temple many days in search of oil to defile. Despite their strength and numbers, they overlooked one flask. A few weak, battle-weary Jews found it immediately.
   HaMeiri in Lehodos U’lehallel; Sefer HaEshkol, Chanukah 6:13

3. Wanting the oil to last, 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.
   Chidushei HaRim

4. The golden Menorah was ritually impure. So were all the Jewish soldiers, having come in contact with death on the battlefield. Therefore, they were forced to make a temporary earthenware Menorah, because earthenware is more resistant to impurity. But earthenware is porous, and when it’s new it absorbs a small but significant part of any oil put in it. Therefore, one night’s oil for a gold Menorah was not sufficient for an earthenware menorah because some of the oil is lost to absorption.
   Bava Metzia 40a & Maharsha Chullin 55

5. In one account, the text reads “and there wasn’t enough (oil) in it to burn even one day…”
   Sheiltos DeRav Achai Gaon, Parshas Vayishlach
   found in footnote to Megillas Antiochus in Siddur Otzar Hatefillos

6. Seven days commemorate the miracle of the oil, and one day commemorates the miracle that a few weak Jewish soldiers defeated the mighty Greek legions.
   Kedushas Levi

7. Chanukah occurred in the year 3622 (139 BCE). Calendar calculations and other historical sources indicate that the 25th of Kislev, the first day of Chanukah, fell on Shabbat that year. Therefore, they needed to light the menorah before sunset Friday night, and consequently needed a little more than a night’s-worth of oil.
   Atzei Zayis

8. The commandment to light the Menorah with pure oil is written in the Torah (Leviticus, chapters 23 and 24) immediately after the commandment to observe the Succos festival for 8 days (7 days of Succos followed by Shemini Atzeres). The Sages saw this as a Divine hint that Chanukah should be for 8 days.
   Bnei Yisaschar in the name of the Rokeach