

## Kol HaRav

Let me share a story that brings the legend of the miraculous cruse of oil full circle, and if you'll pardon the expression "sheds new light on the Menorah."

The mystery begins with Noah. He sent a dove from the ark to see if the waters had abated... When the dove reached Eretz Yisrael, it plucked an olive branch - a symbol of new growth and the renewal of life - from an olive tree and returned to the ark with the branch in its beak.

Noah took the olive branch and snipped the olives. He pressed the olives into oil and sealed the oil in a flask. Noah wanted the flask of oil to represent light and truth. When he saw that his son Shem was following in his footsteps, he bequeathed the flask of oil to him. Shem established a school of Torah learning in Jerusalem, where he transmitted the light and truth he had learned from his father to his grandson Ayver. Our patriarch Abraham studied in the school of Shem and Ayver. Being their most promising student, they passed the flask of oil to him.

Abraham entrusted it to his son Isaac. Isaac entrusted it to his son Jacob. When Jacob fled from Esau, he carried the flask of oil with him. It was with this oil that Jacob anointed the stone that supported his head as he slept and dreamed of the angels going up and down the ladder. That little flask of oil sustained Jacob for the twenty years he lived with his father-in-law, Laban. Jacob transmitted the little flask of oil ... to Joseph. When Joseph descended to Egypt, he carried it with him.

Moses carried it out of Egypt and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua transmitted it to the elders; the elders transmitted it to the prophets. The prophet Samuel anointed two kings, Saul and David, with this oil. The oil in the little flask was always replenished.

When King Solomon built the first Holy Temple, he placed the little flask of oil in the cornerstone... none of the foreign conquerors who set foot in Jerusalem knew about the little flask of oil. Only the High Priest knew the secret and transmitted it to his successor just before he died. Judah Maccabee, descendant of the priestly family, knew the secret of the oil. When he marched victoriously into Jerusalem to rededicate the Holy Temple after it had been defiled by the Syrians, he searched for the little flask of oil that was hidden in the cornerstone. He used this oil, this symbol of light and truth, to rekindle the light in the Holy Temple.

While I have no doubt that this was yet another rabbinic musing, I find this story much more appealing than the traditional understanding of the miracle of the cruse of oil. This story portrays the oil as a linking symbol tying together all of Jewish history. In this case, the oil stands for continuity, the kind of which we Jews strive for to this day.

For if we have the courage, the persistence, and the endurance to stand proud as Jews thousands of years after the Maccabees; if we have the resolve to attend contemporary synagogues, to join and support a congregation, as you do - to chant from the same ancient Torah; if we have the same love for Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel, and the modern State of Israel, which represents Jewish sovereignty just as much, if not more than the rule of the Hasmoneans, then indeed the miracle is alive; the oil is still burning; and the Jewish people can radiate its light for millennia to come.  
Chag Urim Sameach

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