



## CHAYEI SARAH

**WHEN YOU REACH YOUR BREAKING POINT, BLOW RIGHT PAST IT**

*The Impossibility of Breaking and Not Breaking at the Same Time*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Chayei Sarah*

Sarah dies at age 127 and is buried in the Machpelah Cave in Hebron, which Abraham purchases from Ephron the Hittite for 400 shekels of silver.

Abraham's servant Eliezer is sent, laden with gifts, to Charan, to find a wife for Isaac. At the village well, Eliezer asks G-d for a sign: when the maidens come to the well, he will ask for some water to drink; the woman who will offer to give his camels water to drink as well shall be the one destined for his master's son.

Rebecca, the daughter of Abraham's nephew Bethuel, appears at the well and passes the "test." Eliezer is invited to their home, where he repeats the story of the day's events. Rebecca returns with Eliezer to the

land of Canaan, where they encounter Isaac praying in the field. Isaac marries Rebecca, loves her, and is comforted over the loss of his mother.

Abraham takes a new wife, Keturah (Hagar), and he fathers six additional sons, but Isaac is designated as his only heir. Abraham dies at age 175 and his two eldest sons, Isaac and Ishmael, bury Abraham next to Sarah

## QUESTION

Despite anti-Semitism, pogroms, crusades and so much more, we've endured.  
What is our survival secret?



Sarah's Shabbat candles burned miraculously the entire week, until the next Shabbat, remaining a continuous flame.

# TEXT 1

*Midrash,  
Bereshit Rabah 60:16*

כָּל יָמִים שֶׁהָיְתָה שָׂרָה קִנְיָת הָיָה נֵר דּוֹלֵק מִלִּילֵי שַׁבָּת וְעַד לִילֵי שַׁבָּת, וְכִיּוֹן שָׁמְתָה - פָּסַק אוֹתוֹ  
הַנֵּר, וְכִיּוֹן שֶׁבָּאת רִבְקָה - תִּזְר

So long as Sarah was alive, her candles would burn from Friday evening to the next Friday evening. Upon her passing, this miraculous flame was extinguished. When Rebecca arrived, the supernatural flame reappeared.

A woman in debt had only one jar of oil. With Elisha's guidance, she miraculously filled numerous jars with that one jar of oil and used the proceeds to pay off her debts.



# TEXT 2

II Kings 4:4–6

ד. ובֹאֵת וְסָגְרָת הַדֶּלֶת בְּעֶדְךָ וּבְעֵד בְּנֶיךָ, וְיָצַקְתָּ עַל כָּל הַכֵּלִים הָאֵלֶּה, וְהִמָּלֵא תִסִּיעֵי.

ה. וַתֵּלֶךְ מֵאִתּוֹ וַתִּסְגֹּר הַדֶּלֶת בְּעֵדָהּ וּבְעֵד בְּנֵיהָ, הֵם מִגִּשִּׁים אֵלֶיהָ וְהִיא מוֹצֵקֶת.

ו. וַיְהִי כִּמְלֵאת הַכֵּלִים, וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל בְּנָהּ: הַגִּישָׁה אֵלַי עוֹד כֵּלִי, וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ: אֵין עוֹד כֵּלִי, וַיַּעֲמֵד הַשָּׁמֶן.

4. “Enter your home and close the door on yourself and your sons. Pour oil into all these vessels and carry the full ones away.”

5. She left him and closed the door on herself and her sons. They brought the vessels, and she poured.

6. When the vessels were full, she told her son, “Bring me another vessel.” He told her, “There are no more vessels.” Then the oil stopped.

## QUESTION

If similar miracles occurred at least twice in Jewish history without fanfare, why did this miracle of Chanukah deserve such a major- 8 day festival?



# TEXT 3

Talmud, Shabbat 21b

שֶׁכְּשֹׁנְכֵנְסוּ יוֹנִים לְהִיכֹל, טָמְאוּ כָּל הַשְּׁמָנִים שֶׁבַּהִיכָל. וְכִשְׁגָּבְרָה מַלְכוּת בֵּית חַשְׁמוֹנָאִי וְנִצְחָוּם,  
בְּדָקוּ וְלֹא מָצְאוּ אֶלָּא פֶּךָ אֶחָד שֶׁל שֶׁמֶן שֶׁהָיָה מוֹנַח בְּחוֹתָמוֹ שֶׁל כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל.

וְלֹא הָיָה בּוֹ אֶלָּא לְהַדְלִיק יוֹם אֶחָד. נַעֲשֶׂה בּוֹ נִס וְהַדְלִיקוּ מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁמוֹנֶה יָמִים.

לְשָׁנָה אַחֲרֵת קָבְעוּם וַעֲשָׂאוּם יָמִים טוֹבִים בְּהִלֵּל וְהוֹדָאָה.

When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they defiled the oil in the Sanctuary.  
When the Hasmonean monarchy overwhelmed and defeated them, they  
searched and found only one cruse of oil that remained with the seal of the  
High Priest.

There was only sufficient oil to burn for one day. A miracle occurred, and they  
lit the candelabra from it for eight days.

The next year the sages enshrined these days as holidays with special  
recitations of praise and thanksgiving.

## OPTION #1



The oil was divided into equal parts, one-eighth of the oil was poured into the menorah each night.

## OPTION #2



They poured all of the oil into the menorah, and each night, the menorah remained as full as before.

# TEXT 4

Rabbi Yosef Caro,  
*Beit Yosef*,  
*Orach Chayim* 470

שחילקו שמן שבפך לשמונה חלקים, ובכל לילה היו נותנים במנורה חלק אחד, והיה דולק עד הבוקר.

ועוד יש לומר: שלאחר שנתנו שמן בנרות המנורה כשיעור, נשאר הפך מלא כבתחילה.

They divided the oil in the cruse into eight equal parts and poured one-eighth of the oil into the candelabra each night.

Another possibility is that after they poured all the oil into the candelabra [each night], the cruse remained full as before.

## 2 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MITZVAH:

1. Our Mitzvot are to be performed through physical means, the oil had to be natural.
2. For the Mitzvah to be performed, the Menorah had to contain the complete measure of oil.

# TEXT 5A

Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin,  
*Hamo'adim Behalachah* 1,  
Chanukah 1

אין כשר למנורה אלא שמן זית, שמובנו כמשמעותו: שמן שגדל על עץ זית, ונעשה מפרי הזית.

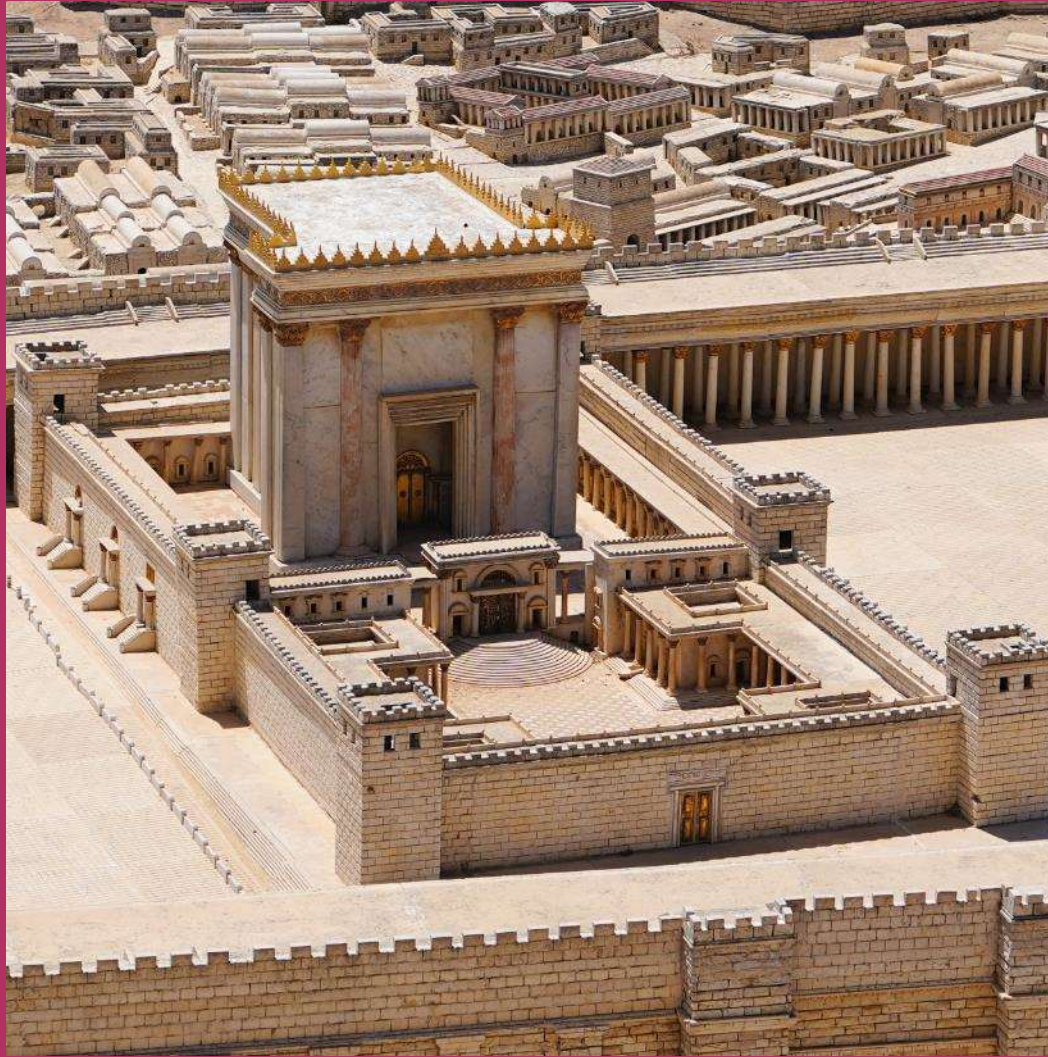
Only olive oil is kosher for the candelabra. The meaning here is rather literal: oil extracted from a natural olive that grew on an olive tree.

# TEXT 5B

Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin,  
ibid.

"מערב עד בוקר" — תן לה מידתה שתהא דולקת והולכת כל הלילה, מערב ועד בוקר.

The words [prepare the lamps] “from morning to evening” (Exodus 27:21) instruct us to place enough oil in the candelabra to burn through the night, from evening to morning.



In the Holy of Holies, despite the Ark's size, the surrounding space appeared larger, demonstrating God's ability to transcend physical limitations.

# TEXT 6A

Rabbi Shalom Dovber  
Schneersohn, ibid.

בעיקרים כתב, אשר הנמנעות קיימות גם בחיק הבורא. שאי אפשר שיהיה קוטר המרובע שווה לצלעו כו' וכדומה.

והאמת אינו כמו שכתב בעל העיקרים, כי אם בחיק הבורא נמנעו הנמנעות. רצונו לומר, שאין דבר נמנע בחיק הבורא. וכאשר ראינו במוחש בבית המקדש, שמקום הארון לא היה מן המידה.

הבית קודש הקודשים היה כ' אמות אורך, וי' אמות רוחב. והארון היה אמתיים וחצי ארכו ואמה וחצי רחבו, ועמד באמצע קודש הקודשים. והיה צריך להיות באורך שמונה אמות וג' רבעי אמה מזה, ושמונה אמות וג' רבעי אמה מזה. וברוחב היה צריך להיות ארבע אמות ורבע אמה מזה, וארבע אמות ארבע אמה מזה. ולאחר המדידה נמצא שהיה עשר אמות מזה ועשר אמות מזה, וכן ברוחב - חמש אמות מזה וחמש אמות מזה.

אם כן, הארון שהיה במידה ועמד במקום, ומכל מקום לא נתפס בגדר מקום, שהרי לא פחת את המידה, כנתבאר לעיל. הרי שבכוח וביכולת הבורא להיות מקום ובלתי מקום בנושא אחד, וכמו כן יוכל להיות שארי הפכים בנושא אחד

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# TEXT 6A

Rabbi Shalom Dovber  
Schneersohn,  
*Sefer Hamaamarim*  
5649, p. 274

[Rabbi Yosef Albo] wrote in his *Ikarim* [*Book of Fundamental Principles*] that some things are impossible even for G-d. For example, He can't make the [diagonal] diameter of a square equal to its side.

The author of the *Ikarim* was wrong because, in fact, nothing is impossible for G-d. We saw a veritable example of this in the Holy Temple—the space of the holy ark did not occupy space.

The Holy of Holies was twenty cubits in length and ten in width. The ark was two and a half cubits in length and one and a half in width. The ark was positioned at the center of the Holy of Holies. That should have left eight and three-quarters cubits of empty space to each side in length and four and a quarter to each side in width. Yet, upon measuring, they found ten cubits to each side in length and five to each side in width.

It follows that the ark occupied a measurable space and simultaneously did not occupy space. The proof, as we explained, is that it did not reduce the expanse of the room's unoccupied space. This demonstrates that G-d is able to occupy and not occupy space simultaneously. As He is capable of this, so is He capable of any paradox.

# TEXT 6b

Paul Sutton,  
“Is It a Wave or a Particle?  
It’s Both, Sort Of,”  
[www.space.com](http://www.space.com)

Is it a wave, or is it a particle? This seems like a very simple question.

Waves are very distinct phenomena in our universe, as are particles. And we have different sets of mathematics to describe each of them. So, if we want to go about describing the entire universe, this appears to be a very handy classification scheme—except when it isn’t. And it isn’t in one of the most important aspects of our universe: the subatomic world.

When it comes to things like photons and electrons, the answer to the question “Do they behave like waves or particles?” is . . . yes.

## QUESTION

Is it possible that the flame consumed the oil, and yet the oil remained unconsumed?

## ANSWER:

The Chanukah miracle was a quantum miracle, where the flames both burned naturally and consumed fuel while preserving the oil for the next day, similar to the Ark's simultaneous presence and absence in space.

# TEXT 7

The Rebbe,  
Rabbi Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, *Likutei Sichot*  
15, p. 186

ויש לומר, אז דער פירוש אין דעם איז (ניט אז דער שמן האט אויסגעברענט און דערנאך האבן זיך די נרות ווידער אנגעפילט מיט שמן בדרך נס, נאר) אז דער שמן האט געברענט און צוזאמען דערמיט איז פון אים גארניט נחסר געווארן . . .

קומט אויס, אז אין דעם נס איז געווען א דבר והיפוכו: אן אש טבעי (ואור) הנרות וואס קומט פון שמן (וכיוצא בזה) מוז דערביי זיין כליון השמן, ולאידך גיסא, האט גארניט געפעלט פון דעם שמן - כליון און ניט כליון בבת אחת.

Rather than the oil being consumed and then miraculously replenished, we suggest that the oil was consumed and remained intact simultaneously. . . .

This entails a miracle of opposites. Natural flame or candlelight must consume its fuel [and the Chanukah lights did just that]. Yet, the volume of oil was not diminished in the least. . . . It was combustion and non-combustion simultaneously.

# TEXT 8a

Rabbi Yosef Caro,  
*Bet Yosef*,  
*Orach Chayim* 470

אי נמי, שבליל ראשון נתנו כל השמן בנרות ודלקו כל הלילה, ובבוקר מצאו  
הנרות מלאים שמן.

Another option: They poured all the oil into the candelabra on the first night.  
The candles burned all night, yet in the morning, they found that the  
candelabra's cups were full.

# TEXT 8b

Midrash,  
*Bereshit Rabah* 11:2

רבי אֶלְעָזָר אוֹמֵר . . . פֶּעַם אֶחַת הִדְלַקְתִּי אֶת הַנֵּר בְּלִילֵי שַׁבָּת, וּבָאתִי וּמָצָאתִי אוֹתוֹ בְּמוֹצָאֵי שַׁבָּת דָּלוּק, וְלֹא חָסַר כָּלוּם.

Rabbi Elazar said, . . . “I once lit my candle on Friday evening, and when I arrived on Saturday night, I found it still burning, and the oil was not diminished.”

To understand why the Jews were deserving of this unique miracle, let's explore the type of war they fought.



# TEXT 9

*Siddur Tehillat Hashem,*  
Annotated Edition,  
Weekday Amidah,  
pp. 51–52

בִּימֵי מַתִּיתָהוּ בֶן יוֹחָנָן כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל חֲשׂמוֹנָאִי וּבָנָיו, כְּשֶׁעָמְדָה מַלְכוּת יוֹן הֶרֶשֶׁעָה עַל עַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
לְהַשְׁכִּיחַם תּוֹרָתְךָ וּלְהַעֲבִירָם מִחֻקֵּי רְצוֹנְךָ.

In the days of Matityahu, son of Yochanan the High Priest, when the Hellenic government rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and transgress the decrees of Your will.



## 3 KINDS OF BATTLES:

### EGYPT



“G-d will fight for you.  
You remain silent.”

### MIDIAN



The Jews fought  
their battles, but G-d  
won their wars.

### CHANUKAH



The Jews felt all  
alone. They were  
fighting a natural war.

# TEXT 10A

Exodus 14:13–14

יג. וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעָם: אַל תִּירְאוּ, הִתְיַצְבוּ וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת ה' אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם הַיּוֹם, כִּי  
אֲשֶׁר רְאִיתֶם אֶת מִצְרַיִם הַיּוֹם - לֹא תִסִּיפוּ לִרְאֹתָם עוֹד עַד עוֹלָם.

יד. ה' יִלָּחֶם לָכֶם, וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ שָׁמְטִים.

13. Moses said to the people, “Do not fear. Stand firm and see the salvation that G-d will wreak for you today, because never again, for the rest of eternity, will you see the Egyptians as you see them today.

14. “G-d will fight for you. You remain silent.”

# TEXT 10B

Numbers 31:6

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה אֶלֶף לַמָּטָה לַצָּבָא, אֹתָם וְאֶת פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן לַצָּבָא, וְכָלִי הַקֹּדֶשׁ  
וְחִצְצֹרוֹת הַתְּרוּעָה בְּיָדוֹ.

Moses sent a thousand troops from each tribe along with Phineas, the son of Eleazar the priest, who brought the sacred vessels and the trumpets.

# TEXT 10c

Numbers 31:48–49

מח. וַיִּקְרְבוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה הַפְּקָדִים אֲשֶׁר לְאַלְפֵי הַצָּבָא, שְׂרֵי הָאֲלָפִים וְשְׂרֵי הַמֵּאוֹת.  
מט. וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה: עֲבַדְיָךְ נִשְׂאוּ אֶת רֹאשׁ אַנְשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדֵנוּ, וְלֹא נִפְקַד מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ.

48. The officers appointed over the army's thousands, the commanders of thousands, and the commanders of hundreds approached Moses.

49. They said to Moses, "Your servants counted the soldiers who were in our charge, and not one man is missing from our ranks."

# TEXT 11

*Ibid.*

וַיִּשְׁלַח סָפָרִים לְכָל מְדִינוֹת מַלְכוּתוֹ, וַיָּבֹאוּ שָׂרֵי כָּל הָעַמִּים וְהַמְּלָכוֹת, וְגַם פִּילִים מְלַבָּשִׁים  
וְשָׂרִיוֹנִים עִמָּהֶם בָּאוּ. שְׁנִית קָם בַּגְּרִיס הָרָשָׁע וַיָּבֹאוּ לִירוּשָׁלַיִם. בָּקַע הַחוֹמָה, וַיִּנְתֹּק הַמָּבוֹא,  
וַיִּשְׁבֹּר בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה פָּרְצוֹת, וְגַם מִן הָאֲבָנִים שִׁבְרַע אֶחָד הָיוּ כָּעָפָר. וַיַּחְשׁוּב בְּלִבּוֹ  
וַיֹּאמֶר: הַפַּעַם הַזֹּאת לֹא יוּכְלוּ לִי, כִּי רַב חֵילִי וְעֹז יָדַי . . .

וַכְשֵׁמוֹעַ חֲמִשָּׁה בְּנֵי מִתְתָּיָה, קָמוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ לְמַצָּפָה גִלְעָד . . . צוּם גָּזְרוּ, וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עַל הָאָפֶר לְבִקֵּשׁ  
רַחֲמִים מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם. אָז נָפַל בְּלִבָּם עֲצָה טוֹבָה . . .

עַל זֶה יָצְאוּ חֲמִשָּׁה בְּנֵי מִתְתָּיָה בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה, וַיִּלְחָמוּ בָּעַמִּים וַיַּהַרְגוּ בָהֶם הֶרֶג רַב . . . וְאַלְקִי  
הַשָּׁמַיִם נָתַן כָּל גִּיבוּרֵי הָעַמִּים בְּיָדָם וַיַּהַרְגוּ בָהֶם הֶרֶג רַב, כָּל אֲחוּזֵי חֶרֶב וְכָל מוֹשְׁכֵי קִשָּׁת, שָׂרֵי  
הַחֵיל וְהַסִּגָּנִים – לֹא נֹתֵר בָּהֶם שָׂרִיד, וַיָּנוּסוּ שְׂאֵר הָעַמִּים לְמְדִינוֹת הָיָם.

Antiochus sent letters to all his royal domains, and all the clan chieftains arrived with armored elephants. The wicked general Bagris invaded Jerusalem for a second time. He broke through the wall, shattered the gateway, made thirteen breaches in the Temple, and ground the stones to dust. He thought to himself, “This time, they will not defeat me; my army is numerous, and my hand is mighty.” . . .

CONTINUED ►

# TEXT 11

*Megilat Antiochus*

The five sons of Matityahu went to Mizpeh in Gilead. . . . They fasted, sat in ashes, and prayed to the G-d of Heaven for mercy; then a good plan came to their minds. .

..

Shortly thereafter, the five sons of Matityahu attacked the pagan forces, inflicting severe losses upon them. . . . The G-d of Heaven delivered into their hands all swordsmen and archers, army officers and high officials. None of these survived. The survivors were compelled to seek refuge in the coastal cities.

## MIRACLE

G-d creates new oil.

G-d upgrades existing oil.

Oil burns naturally and supernaturally simultaneously.

## WAR

G-d fights, and we do nothing.

We fight with superhuman powers.

We go to war and our natural efforts produce supernatural results.

## ANSWERS

If similar miracles occurred at least twice in Jewish history, why did this miracle of Chanukah deserve such a major- 8 day festival?

- The Chanukah battle was different. It was a blend of natural and miraculous elements, therefore G-d produced a supernatural miracle.

Despite anti-Semitism, pogroms, crusades and so much more, we've endured. What is our survival secret?

- When we put everything on the line for G-d, G-d reciprocates and we simultaneously reach our breaking point and don't break.
- This is the miraculous nature of G-d, and we earn some of that by doing our part.



## KEY POINTS

1. Chanukah was not the first time that oil lasted longer than is naturally possible. Sarah's candles in our parshah is one example of this happening.
2. In previous cases, the oil was either replenished or miraculously upgraded. The Chanukah miracle was unique; the flames were produced naturally and supernaturally simultaneously.
3. This is why we have a holiday to celebrate the Chanukah oil miracle, even though there is no holiday to celebrate the other oil miracles.
4. Before Chanukah, Jews won many wars. In some cases, G-d did all the fighting. In some cases, the Jews fought, but G-d outfitted them with supernatural powers.

## KEY POINTS

5. The Chanukah battles were different. The Jews had no supernatural powers, but they fought as if they did. Thus, G-d granted them supernatural success with a miracle that merged the natural and the supernatural.
6. Every Jew has a breaking point. But when we act as if we don't have a breaking point, G-d renders our breaking point unbreakable. We reach our breaking point, but we don't break.

