Ostensibly, the miracle we celebrate on Chanukah is that the Jews found one flask containing enough pure oil to last for one night, and yet it kept the Menorah lit for eight nights. If so, the miracle only lasted for seven nights. So why do we celebrate eight nights of Chanukah? Here are eight reasons:

The first night was a miracle too

The Greeks ransacked the Beit HaMikdash for many days in search of oil to defile. Despite their strength and numbers, they overlooked one flask, which the few weak, battle-wearied Jews found immediately. That was the miracle of the first day [and then the oil lasted for another seven]. (HaMeiri in LeHodot UleHallel; Sefer HaEshkol, Chanukah 6:13)

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 is 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. Hence even the first night’s light was a miracle. (Bava Metzia 40a, Maharsha Chullin 55)

In one account, the text reads “and there wasn’t enough (oil) it to burn even one day...” (Sheiltot DeRav Achai Gaon, Parashat Vayishlach, found in a footnote to Megillat Antiochus in Siddur Otzar HaTefilot)

Seven days of Chanukah commemorate the miracle of the oil, and one day commemorates the miracle that a few weak Jewish soldiers defeated the mighty Greek legions. (Bach; Kedushat Levi)

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 for the first night. (*Atzei Zayit*)

**The miracle was a full eight days**

The *Kohanim* divided one night’s oil into eight portions and miraculously, each portion lasted a full night. (*Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 670*)

Wanting the oil to last, the *Kohanim* made the wicks of the Menorah one-eighth of the normal thickness. Nevertheless, the flames burned just as brightly as if the wicks had been the normal thickness. (*Chidushei HaRim*)

The commandment to light the Menorah with pure oil is written in the Torah (Vayikra 23:24), immediately after the commandment to observe Sukkot for eight days (seven days of Sukkot followed by Shemini Atzeret). The Sages saw this as a Divine hint that Chanukah should also be for eight days. (*Bnei Yissaschar in the name of the Rokeach*)

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1 Research based on Sefer Ner LeMeah, Rabbi Yerachmiel Zeltzer.