



# Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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## Light Insight

The primary mitzvah of Chanuka is to celebrate the miracle of the Menorah by lighting our menorahs for eight days. However, there is a dispute in the Talmud between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel whether we should increase the number of candles each day from one to eight, or start with eight and remove a candle each day from eight to one.

Beis Shammai claims that we should decrease the number of candles, learned from the bulls that were offered as sacrifices in the Temple on Succot, which were offered in descending order from 13 to 7 on each of the 7 days of Succot. 70 bulls in total were offered each Succot, corresponding to the 70 Nations of the world. The Temple sacrifices, which unlocked a force of blessing from heaven for the entire world, were unfortunately misunderstood by the nations of the world. As a result, the Jewish People have suffered countless pogroms throughout the ages including the destruction of two Holy Temples.

Although the Greeks did not actually destroy our Temple, they did contaminate it. Chanuka celebrates the return of holiness to the Temple after the contamination of the Greeks. Beis Hillel therefore claims that since holiness was returned to the Temple, and since we always move upwards in matters of holiness, then we should increase the candles from one to eight in order to illustrate this increase in

holiness. What underlies their dispute on a deeper level? Chanuka took place in Israel during the Hellenistic oppression known as the Greek Exile. It was further dubbed the 'exile of darkness' because the Greeks made every effort to make Jews see and understand the world in a way which was alien to the Torah. 'Darkness' — because nothing is as dark as the enslavement of the human mind.

There are two ways that you can combat darkness and evil in the world. You can attack them by fighting whatever is wrong in the world, or you can create such a tremendous light that the darkness just fades away. Chanuka expresses the victory of light over darkness, but the question lies in what strategy is most successful: to burn away and destroy evil, or to create a greater light so that the darkness just vanishes?

A flame has two very distinct properties: it can burn, and it can illuminate. In combating evil in the world, do we destroy it, burn it, or do we illuminate Torah creating a greater light in the world to dissipate the darkness? This is the nature of the dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel. Both methods are valid, but what is the main lesson of Chanuka and the primary way that the Jewish People are a light unto the nations?

Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel agree on the purpose of kindling the menorah — to rekindle in ourselves the light of the triumph over darkness. And they both agree that the number of candles should be different each

night to signify that each day of the miracle is unique. But its uniqueness can be expressed either by adding or subtracting a candle each day. Beis Shammai understands that when we fight the negative corrupting aspects of the prevalent pagan world-culture either through sacrifices, (or prayer when we have no Temple) we are steadily wiping out their influence on us, which is reflected in the decreasing pattern of the sacrifices on Succot. Thus, we should light the menorah in the same way: starting with eight and reducing the number of candles each night. In this way, the burning quality of the flame symbolizes the diminishing effect that the negative forces of the world have on us, the destruction of Greek paganism, and ultimately the destruction of evil in the Universe.

On the other hand, Beis Hillel sees the battle against immorality in the world, not as a confrontation, but rather, as an important reason to raise ourselves spiritually, to become the embodiment of morality in the world by living according to Torah principles. This way, the entire world will see us and want to imitate us. Thus, says Beis Hillel, the primary method of wiping out darkness is by increasing the illumination of Torah everywhere, not by burning away evil, but rather by increasing our light as a Torah Nation. For this reason we increase the number of candles each night to remind ourselves of our responsibility, as Jews, to steadily increase the light of Torah knowledge and understanding in the world, banishing the darkness of evil by becoming a light unto the nations.

## Response Line

### Colored Chanuka Candles

*Bob & Jeannie Roemmich wrote:*

*If one has a mixed colored set of small red, green, blue, and yellow Chanuka candles, does it matter as to the order that they are placed in the menorah, and from which side do you light them, as you look toward the menorah?*

Dear Bob & Jeannie,

There's no tradition regarding the color of the candles; so any color is okay, including plaid and infra-red! And the color order is up to you.

Although there are other customs, the most com-

mon one for placing the candles in the menorah is as follows: On the first day place one candle on the right side of the menorah. On the second day put a candle there and another one to the left of it. On the third day add the third candle to the left of those. And so on. Each night another candle goes on the left side of the last one.

When lighting, you start with the new one, the one furthest on the left. You then move towards the right, lighting each one in order, the last candle being the one on the far right.

Note that the small colored Chanuka candles aren't long enough to use on Friday, because the candles must be lit before sunset and must remain alight for a half hour after dark. So Friday afternoon you should use big white Shabbat candles, or wicks and oil. The candles don't have to be placed in a menorah, but should be in a straight line.

## LOVEof theLAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel*

### *Tekoah*

**T**he oil of the Menorah is the subject of the Chanuka miracle. Where did this oil for the Menorah, and for the flour offerings, come from?

Tekoah was the city in the ancient Land of Israel which was the primary source of the olive oil used in the Holy Temple.

The Biblical source for this city as a source of oil is the story of King David's military commander-in-

chief, Yoav, who employed a wise woman from Tekoah to put on a dramatic performance before the king in order to effect reconciliation between him and his son Avshalom, after Avshalom's act of fratricide. Olive oil makes one wise, say our Sages, and the abundance of such oil is what produced the wise woman of Tekoah who succeeded in her difficult task.

Tekoah is today the name of a thriving Jewish settlement established in the Judean Desert shortly after the Six-Day War.

# HAPPY CHANUKA