

### How Many Candles?

The Talmud teaches (-Shabbat 21b), "*The Sages taught, the (basic) mitzva of Chanukah is (each day to have) a light (kindled by) a person, for his household. And the mehadrin, (those who are meticulous in the performance of mitzvot), (kindle) a light for each and every one (in the household). And the mehadrin min hamehadrin (who are even more meticulous), (adjust the number of lights daily), Beit Shammai say, on the first day (one kindles) eight lights and, from there on, gradually decreases (the number of lights). And Beit Hillel say, on the first day one kindles one (light), and from there on, gradually increases (the number of lights)... two amora'im (Sages of the Talmudic era)... disagreed... One said, the reason for Beit Shammai (is that the number of lights) corresponds to the incoming days (on the first day, eight days remain, one kindles eight lights...).* *The reason for Beit Hillel, (the number of lights) corresponds to the outgoing days (to the number of the days of Chanukah that were already observed). And one said that the reason for Beit Shammai is that (the number of lights) corresponds to the bulls of the festival of Sukkot (each succeeding day one fewer was sacrificed). The reason for Beit Hillel is (based on the principle) 'One elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity and one does not downgrade.'"*

When we find the term "*(two amora'im) disagreed,*" this lends to a dispute not only in the *reasons*, but in a legal outcome to these different reasons. *Tosafot* rules that the "*mehadrin min hamehadrin*" is an addition to the basic "*a light (kindled by) a person, for his household,*" but not to the "*mehadrin.*" Meaning that not each member of the household changes the numbers of lights. Only the head of household lights, and adds a light each succeeding night. *Maimonides* rules that the "*mehadrin min hamehadrin*" is an addition to the "*mehadrin.*" Meaning that each member of the household lights, and adds a light each succeeding night. Commentaries explain the dispute between *Tosafot* and *Maimonides* to be pending on which set of reasons to Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel we follow. If the reason is because of, "*corresponds to the incoming days... outgoing days,*" then only the head of household needs to light the amount of candles, showing the amount of days that are, "*ingoing*" or "*outgoing*". However, if we say the reasons are, "*corresponds to the bulls of the festival of Sukkot... One elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity and one does not downgrade,*" then we don't need the amount of kindled lights to tell us the amount of days, then every member of the household will light the amount of lights for that specific night.

However, in truth, we can say that even according to our custom, that each household member lights the appropriate amount of lights for each night, that will be a legal difference between the set of reasons the two Sages each give for the opinions of Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel, as we will now see.

*Case:* A person, for whatever reason, kindles one light on the second night. How many lights should he kindle on the third night?

According to the first set of reasons, in which Beis Hillel's reason is, "*corresponds to the outgoing days,*" it is readily understood that on night three he should kindle three, regardless of how many he kindled on night two. However, according to the set of reasons in which Beis Hillel's reason is, "*One elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity and one does not downgrade,*" it would be enough to kindle on night three only two, since this is fulfilling the, "*One elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity,*" from the previous night.

Now, this legal difference between the two sets of reasons is only in a case of "*post factum*" of making an error on the previous night.

*Case:* A person, on the third night, has oil, or the likes, to kindle only two lights. How many lights should he kindle?

According to the first set of reasons, in which Beis Hillel's reason is, "*corresponds to the outgoing days,*" being that he anyway can't, "*correspond to the outgoing days,*" therefore, kindling one light should suffice. However, according to the set of reasons in which Beis Hillel's reason is, "*One elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity and one does not downgrade,*" even though he can't fulfill, "*One elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity,*" he should at least fulfill, "*and one does not downgrade.*" Thus, he should kindle the two lights.

*Let's Go Deeper:* The difference between the sets of reasons is at the essence of the connection between, "*mehadrin min hamehadrin,*" and "*The Mitzva of Chanukah Lights.*"

Simply speaking, the difference between the two sets of reasons is: In the first set of reasons, the reason of both, Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, are connected to the days of Chanukah. How many Chanukah days are *outgoing* or *incoming*. However, according to the second set of reasons, both reasons are but of a "*Side Matter.*" "*the bulls of the festival of Sukkot,*" or one's appropriate behavior of, "*One elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity and one does not downgrade.*"

In other words, according to the set of reasons, "*correspond to the outgoing/incoming days,*" the "*mehadrin min hamehadrin,*" which is connected to the *Days of Chanukah*, and thus, is a detail in the mitzva itself\*, and the lights become an, "*Object of a Mitzva,*" of the, "*The Mitzva of Chanukah Lights.*" As we practically see that

the additional candle of each Chanukah day adds on in the miracle of Chanukah, how in the story of Chanukah, there was on each of the eight days the miracle anew in the one jug of pure oil that the Hashmonaim found in the Holy Temple (which is why we make a blessing on kindling the Chanukah lights on each of the eight nights of Chanukah). However, according to the set of reasons, "*corresponds to the bulls of the festival of Sukkot,*" and, "*One elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity,*" in which the additional daily Chanukah lights are not of, "*The Mitzva of Chanukah Lights,*" but rather of a "*Side Matter*" obligation on the "*Person,*" (in which there is an elevation of holiness in the "*Person*") and thus, the additional daily Chanukah lights are not an, "*Object of a Mitzva,*" but of a mundane object.

\*Note: In Footnote #14 the Rebbe points out that this is the difference between the two terminologies (i) "*Mehadrin,*" which speaks of the "*Person*" being meticulous, and (ii) "*Choicest of the Mitzva,*" which speaks of the "*Mitzvah Object,*" being done in the choicest of ways. This then explains the wording of Maimonides, in which he writes, "*And if one is meticulous upon this and does the Choicest of the Mitzva...*"

With this, we will now understand the emphasis and the wordiness in Rashi's commentary on this discussion in the Talmud: "*The bulls of the festival: They continue to decrease in the sacrifices of Torah-portion of Pinchas,*" and "*We elevate in sanctity and we do not downgrade: We learn this from a verse - in (Tractate) Menachot (-99a) in the chapter [entitled] 'Shtei HaLechem'.*"

Questions: (i) Why the wordiness of, "*in the sacrifices of Torah-portion of Pinchas*"? (ii) Why is it important to point out that, "*We elevate...*" "*We learn this from a verse*"? (iii) And that this extrapolation of the verse is found, "*in (Tractate) Menachot (-99a) in the chapter [entitled] 'Shtei HaLechem,*" when the extrapolation there is a general lesson concerning the laws discussed in *Tractate Menachot*, with no connection to Chanukah?

\*\*Note: In Footnote #22 the Rebbe points out that simply speaking, Rashi's saying, "*They continue to decrease in the sacrifices,*" is to point out that we do find that we downgrade in sanctity, and thus this isn't a legal problem. However, this doesn't explain why Rashi adds on, "*of Torah-portion of Pinchas.*"

\*\*\*Note: In Footnote #23 the Rebbe points out that maybe Rashi is coming to teach us that the law of, "*We elevate in sanctity,*" is biblical, learned from a verse. And with this, we now have the answer to the question of the commentaries concerning where do we find that one makes a blessing over a *hidur* of a mitzvah.

*Explanation:* Rashi is emphasizing that according to this opinion of the reason of Beit Shammai and of Beit Hillel, the reasons are not connected, neither to Chanukah, nor to the miracle of Chanukah. "*The bulls of the festival: They continue to decrease in the sacrifices of Torah-portion of Pinchas,*" and therefore has no connection at all with Chanukah. "*We elevate in sanctity and we do not downgrade: We learn this from a verse - in (Tractate) Menachot (-99a) in the chapter [entitled] 'Shtei HaLechem,'*" and therefore, (i) this law is extrapolated from a Biblical verse, while the entire concept of Chanukah is Rabbinical, and (ii) this law is extrapolated, "*in (Tractate) Menachot (-99a) in the chapter [entitled] 'Shtei HaLechem,'*" giving us a general guidance concerning the topics discussed there in *Tractate Menachot*, void of any connection to Chanukah.

Now, according to this difference between the two sets of reasons (whether the additional candles are (i) a "*Mitzva-Object*" of "*The Mitzvah of Chanukah*" or whether they are (ii) upon the behavior of the "*Person*"), we understand that the difference in the legal implications discussed previously in the case of "*A person, for whatever reason, kindles one light on the second night. How many lights should he kindle on the third night?*" is not mandatory to see it as such. For also according to reason of Beit Hillel being "*corresponds to the outgoing days,*" in which he anyway cannot "*correspond to the outgoing days,*" nevertheless, he should still kindle at least the two lights that he does have, being that according to this reason, the additional daily candles are an, "*Object of a Mitzva,*" of the, "*The Mitzva of Chanukah Lights*" itself, and therefore, he should do as much as he can of the, "*Object of a Mitzva,*" of the, "*The Mitzva of Chanukah Lights,*" itself. And with this, he is not just publicizing the *general* miracle of Chanukah, but also the fact that the miracle of each succeeding day was *increasing* in relation to the miracle that took place on the first day of Chanukah.

However, there would be a legal difference between the two sets of reasons in a case of one who does not have sufficient oil, or the likes, to even match the *hidur* of the previous night. i. e. If on the eight night he didn't even have enough to kindle seven lights. And here, the difference between the two sets of reasons reverse:

According to the reason of, "*correspond to the outgoing days,*" in which the additional daily candles are an, "*Object of a Mitzva,*" of the, "*The Mitzva of Chanukah Lights*" itself, thus, he should kindle as many lights as he can (and this overrules the concern of if someone seeing six lights would then erroneously think that it is the sixth night of Chanukah). However, according to the reason of, "*We elevate in sanctity and we do not downgrade,*" in which the additional daily candles are not of, "*The Mitzva of Chanukah Lights,*" but of the obligation of the "*Person,*" to, "*We elevate in sanctity,*" which he cannot perform, thus, he should only perform the, "*basic mitzva of Chanukah is* (each day to have) a *light* (kindled by) *a person, for his household.*" Being that if he kindles the additional five lights that he has, he then enters into the prohibition of, "*and we do not downgrade,*" from the seven lights that he kindled on the previous night. While if he kindles only the, "*basic mitzva of Chanukah is* (each day to have) a *light* (kindled by) *a person, for his household,*" he omits himself from any "*additional lights,*" and thus, he is not transgressing the, "*and we do not downgrade.*"