

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

B"H

CHANUKAH

To Make The Darkness Itself Shine

The Talmud tells us about the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles, "The House of Shamai says, 'the first day you light 8, from here and on continue to subtract (1 light each day).' The House of Hillel says, ' the first day you light 1, from here and on continue to add (1 light each day).' The House of Shammai's reason, is that it is like the bulls of the holiday (of Sukkos, on the first day 13 bulls were offered, on the second 12, and so on). The House of Hillel's reason, is that you go up in holiness and not down."

What do the lights of Chanukah have to do with the bulls of Sukkos, that we should learn one from the other? The question becomes stronger, when you realize that if it were not for a secondary reason, that we go up in holiness and not down, the House of Hillel would agree to the House of Shammai, that it is because of the bulls of Sukkos. What does Sukkos have to do with Chanukah?

Some would like to answer, that it is because both Sukkos and Chanukah are 8 day holidays, so we learn one from the other. If this is the case, we have to understand, what is the significance of an 8 day holiday?

The holiday of Chanukah was established because of the miracle that happened with the menorah in the Temple, that had 7 lights. So why do we have 8 lights and 8 days?

It seems strange that they compare the lights of the menorah to offerings brought on the altar. For starters they were two different vessels, and while the altar was out in the courtyard, the menorah was in a holier place, the Heichal (AKA the Holies), this tells us that the menorah was in a way holier. Even more, when Aaron was commanded to light

the menorah, Hashem told him, "your's (the kindling of the menorah) is greater than their's (the offerings that the Nessiim brought for the altar). In other words, the kindling of the menorah was greater than offerings brought on the altar. What is the meaning of comparing the lights of Chanukah to the bulls of Sukkos?

And finally, the Talmud tells us that the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles begins at sunset. However, the menorah in the Temple was lit an hour and a quarter before sunset (at plag hamincha). If the Chanukah menorah is lit to commemorate the lighting of the menorah in the Temple, why don't we light it an hour and a quarter before sunset? Why do we specifically light it at sunset?

The main point of Chanukah candles is to light up the darkness. Because the miracle of Chanukah came after the darkness of the Greeks, who defiled the Temple, and when they did so, they specifically made a point to defile every bottle of oil that was there, by breaking the seal of the Kohen Gadol that ensured its purity. They didn't break the bottles or pour out the oil, they merely broke the seals. Because they did this, we realize that it was more important to the Greeks to defile the oil than to defile the Temple. What was their intention?

The Greeks didn't want to destroy us physically, they wanted to sever our connection to Hashem. They had no problem with us keeping Judaism, but do it because you want to, not because Hashem wants you to. the oil was symbolic of all that. The whole idea of purity and impurity, is something that doesn't make sense, there is no logic behind it, other than that Hashem said so. And that is what



the Greeks couldn't deal with, and sought to destroy. Of course once they started to make decrees, it snowballed into an outright war on Judaism.

This is why the miracle of finding the jug of oil still sealed with the Kohen Gadol's seal was so significant, because it meant that there is a part of us that is always connected to Hashem, and that connection can never be severed.

Each of us has a neshama, a G-dly soul, it is an actual piece of G-d inside of us. This neshama has 5 parts, the highest part is called yechidah, this part of the neshama is one with Hashem. Not the way Hashem relates to the world, but much higher, the essence of Hashem, beyond existence. This part of the neshama, can not be touched by negative influences, just the opposite, when we tap into that part of the neshama, we affect the world around us in the most amazing way, lighting the darkness of the world, not that our light dispels the darkness, but that the darkness itself begins to shine.

And this is symbolized by the number 8. As it is known in the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidus, that 7 is the number that represents existence, while the number 8 is beyond existence.

Now we can understand why Chanukah is 8 days, and the Chanukah menorah has 8 lights. Because Chanukah is about our connection to Hashem beyond existence, making the darkness itself shine.

Sukkos is also 8 days, because it also connects to Hashem beyond existence, and this is specifically seen in the bulls of Sukkos. On the first 7 days of Sukkos, we brought 70 bulls representing the 70 nations of the world. This is affecting the world naturally, by shining our light upon them, we dispel the darkness. This means that they don't bother us, and they allow us to do what Hashem wants us to do. On the eighth day we brought 1 bull, representing our singular essential bond with Hashem, beyond existence, the

yechidah. By revealing our essence, we affect the world by making the darkness itself into light, meaning, that the nations of the world become a help to us.

It is 7 and 1, 7 in the world and 1 more going beyond existence.

This is why on Sukkos we spend 7 days in the Sukka and on the 8th day, there is no mitzvah to be in the Sukka. Because for 7 days, surrounded by the Sukka, we are surrounded by a great G-dly energy, but we can't internalize it. On the eighth day is when we connect to our yechidah, above existence, and therefore we are able to internalize this great G-dly energy, so we don't need to be surrounded by the Sukka anymore.

And this is why we light the Chanukah menorah at sunset. Because its purpose is to light up the darkness. Until what extent? The Talmud tells us that the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles is until people finish coming from the market place, until the Tarmudai finish coming from the marketplace. The Tarmudai were the lowest of people, they went against the kingdom of heaven, (as their name suggests, tarmud in Hebrew has the same letters as the word moredes, treason). Even the lowest people are affected by the lights of the menorah, to the extent that they become entirely good and with Hashem.

May the light of our Chanukah menorah turn the darkness of the exile to light in a way that the darkness itself begins to shine, and usher in the coming of Moshiach. The time has come.

לע"נ תנחום בן משה יעקב
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