

# The Pardes Hanukkah Companion

חמשה



## LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS



### Nechama Goldman Barash

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*Hanukah* falls in the middle of the winter. The eight-day celebration is reminiscent of the dedication of the Tabernacle (Lev. 8-9) and the Temple (I Kgs 8), as well as the *Sukkot* holiday, which is the only other eight-day holiday. Its unique ritual is the lighting of the menorah, a practice carried out daily in the Tabernacle and Temple. As such, on Hanukah every man, woman and child turns briefly into a priest and every home becomes a mini-sanctuary.

If we go back to the earliest sources about Hanukah, the impetus behind the holiday's enactment was to celebrate a military victory over the Greeks, to commemorate the rededication of the Temple and, most importantly, to acknowledge the salvation from spiritual annihilation. The popular story about the miracle with oil is an element presented later by the Talmud.

In truth, the structure of the holiday – eight days and the kindling of lights – was already in place beforehand. The power of light in the darkness is a theme that appears in two fascinating midrashic texts.

The first concerns God's creation of Adam at the end of the sixth day, followed by the first Shabbat. In *Genesis Rabbah* 11:2, the midrash suggests that to honor Shabbat, God prevented the sun from setting. Only at the end of Shabbat did it become dark for the first time. God shows Adam, who is terrified of the darkness, how to strike two flints together and make fire, thus lightening his darkness (a direct contrast to Greek mythology where man has to steal fire from the gods who are guarding it). God helps man find a way to light up the darkness of the night, which is an integral and cyclical part of the Creation.

In a second source, the *Talmud* presents two pagan holidays – *Kalanda* and *Saturna* – which take place just before and just after the winter solstice. It tells the story of Adam who,

as the days become shorter and shorter, begins to fear the world is coming to an end.

#### Talmud Bavli, Avoda Zara 8a

*When Adam saw the days progressively getting gradually shorter, he said, "Woe is me, perhaps because I sinned, the world around me is becoming dark and returning to its primordial state of chaos and disorder?"... He began keeping an eight-day fast. But as he observed the winter solstice and noted the days progressively lengthening, he said, "This is the world's course," and he observed a festival for eight days.*

לפי שראה אדם הראשון יום שמתמעט והולך אמר אוי לי שמא בשביל שסרחתי עולם חשוך בעדי וחוזר לתוהו ובוהו וזו היא מיתה שנקנסה עלי מן השמים עמד וישב ח' ימים בתענית [ובתפלה] כיון שראה תקופת טבת וראה יום שמאריך והולך אמר מנהגו של עולם הוא הלך ועשה שמונה ימים טובים לשנה האחרת עשאן לאלו ולאלו ימים טובים.

Adam's winter solstice festival is his recognition of God's greatness for creating the world the way He did.

To contrast the two sources: In the first, God reaches out to man, teaching him how to light up the darkness. In the second, man comes to recognize God in the cyclical movement of the shortening and lengthening of the days.

Taken together, we understand that the dark days of winter call on us to create light – internal and external – through prayer and ritual that will sustain us until the natural light returns for longer and longer periods of the day.



# THE MIRACLE OF THE LIGHTS

## Michael Hattin



*Rabbi Michael Hattin teaches Tanakh and Halakha at Pardes and is the Beit Midrash Coordinator for the Pardes Center for Jewish Educators. He is the author of Passages: Text and Transformation in the Parasha and Joshua: The Challenge of the Promised Land.*

Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the holy Temple in 165 BCE. After the miraculous defeat of the tyrannical Syrian-Greeks who had defiled Jerusalem and outlawed the observance of Jewish rituals and Torah study, Judah the Maccabee and his outnumbered fighters triumphantly re-entered Jerusalem and cleansed the sanctuary from impurity. They commemorated their military victory over the oppressor by celebrating a festival of consecration, as the name “Hanukah” – from the root כ.נ.ח. or “dedication” – implies. This consecration included the restoration of the altar, the repair of the Temple structure and the ritual cleansing of its precincts.

The account of the bloody battles that brought victory and the story of the Temple’s rededication are told at length in the non-biblical Book of the Maccabees. But in the famous Talmudic passage that constitutes the most consequential reference to Hanukah in rabbinic literature (Talmud Bavli Shabbat 21b), it is the miracle of the menorah that is at the center of the drama.

Why did the ancient rabbis shift the focus of Hanukah from the military victory and the rededication of the Temple to the specific episode of the menorah, the small jar of pure oil and the miraculous interval of illumination? After all, Hanukah for us is all about lighting. We kindle our individual hanukiahs after the manner of the Temple menorah and we commemorate an eight-day festival because the lamps of the Temple menorah continued to burn.

Rambam tells us that the Hasmoneans not only prevailed against the oppressor, but also succeeded in restoring Jewish sovereignty for a period of “over 200 years” (Mishne Torah, Laws of Hanukah 3:1). While Rambam mentions this to highlight the miracle of the holiday, from the larger

perspective of Jewish history it tends to have the opposite effect. That is to say that the great triumph of Yehuda and his brothers was actually quite short-lived. When we “do the math,” we discover that the period of full sovereignty lasted for less than 80 years – it was not until 141 BCE that Simon, the last surviving Hasmonean brother, was crowned by the people as an independent monarch and in 63 BCE Pompei entered Jerusalem to formally impose Roman rule.

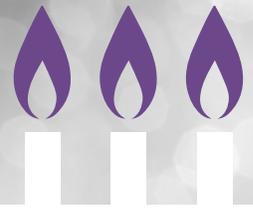
It therefore seems likely that the early rabbis deliberately emphasized the miracle of the menorah because they already realized what most of us could only appreciate in hindsight: military triumphs are short-lived, physical buildings do not stand forever and even political independence can be an ephemeral condition. These things only last until the ascent of the next tyrannical empire. But the light of the menorah – speaking to the ideas of the mind and to the matters of the soul, the purest of oils – reminding us of the Jews’ never-ending capacity for spiritual survival and regeneration, these things are eternal. The military victories of the Hasmoneans were soon forgotten, the Sanctuary and Jerusalem were razed to the ground and the Jewish people were scattered to the far ends of the earth. But the story of the pure oil and the lights that could not be extinguished lived on, carried by the Jewish people wherever they wandered.

Thus it is that Hanukah remains for us a festival of lights, a time to reflect on the matters of the spirit and on the Torah that continues to inspire and guide, even as the Jewish people continue their perilous journey through a human history ruled by tyrannies and governed by despots. As Zechariah the prophet proclaimed, in his vision of the pure Temple menorah that we read as the Haftarah of Shabbat Hanukah: “Not by power, nor by strength, but by My spirit says the Lord of Hosts.”

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# THE HOME & THE WORLD BEYOND

## Leon Morris

Rabbi Leon A. Morris is the President of Pardes.



There is an unusual connection between the mitzvah of lighting Hanukkah candles and one's home. Almost any other mitzvah, such as building a *sukkah*, eating *matzah* and *maror* on Pesach and lighting Shabbat candles, can be performed wherever one happens to be. But for Hanukkah, our earliest sources describe the mitzvah as *ner ish u'veito* – a candle for a person and his or her house.

### Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b

*Our sages taught: The mitzvah of Hanukkah [candles entails lighting] a candle, for a man and his household...*

תנו רבנן: מצות חנוכה נר איש וביתו.

It would appear that the home is inextricably connected to the lighting of Hanukkah candles.

The Rema (Rabbi Moshe Isserless, Poland, 16th century) and many other halakhic authorities wrote that an individual cannot fulfill his or her obligation through lighting the Hanukkah candles in the synagogue.

The Talmud cites an example of a famous rabbi who was traveling during Hanukkah, and who fulfilled the mitzvah of Hanukkah candles vicariously through his family who lit on his behalf in the family home.

### Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 23a

*Rabbi Zeira said: At first, when I was at my master's house, I partnered with my host by [giving] coins. After I married, I said, now I certainly don't need [to do so], for my wife is lighting for me in my house.*

א"ר זירא מריש כי הוינא בי רב משתתפנא בפרטי בהדי אושפיזא בתר דנסיבי איתנא אמינא השתא ודאי לא צריכנא דקא מדליקי עלי בגו ביתאי.

Mishnah Brurah explains that if a person eats a meal at a friend or relative's house, he must light the Hanukkah candles in his home rather than that of the friend.

What's going on here?

Since Hanukkah is about rededicating the Temple in Jerusalem, we might have thought that the synagogue should be the main locus of lighting Hanukkah candles. The synagogue and the *beit midrash* (study hall) are described as a *mikdash me'at*, a miniature sanctuary, once the Temple was destroyed.

No, say our sources. Hanukkah is primarily a mitzvah integrally connected to one's home. *Ner ish u'veito* is much more than a geographic halakhic detail of where one is supposed to light; it is a philosophical assertion.

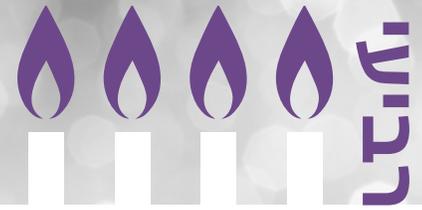
When confronting a monoculture that could not tolerate cultural and religious difference, the Jewish future would be maintained most effectively through the home. The miracle of the endurance of the Jewish people owes far more to the home than to the synagogue. It is undoubtedly our most important Jewish institution. What happens there, away from public view, is perhaps the most indicative of what kind of future awaits us.

At the same time, our homes cannot be closed off to the larger world. The very same page of the Talmud (Shabbat 21b) that ties the home to the lighting of Hanukkah candles explains the exact positioning of the *hanukiah*.

*Our Sages taught: The Hanukkah candle - it is a mitzvah to place it at the door of his house, from the outside.*

ת"ר נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו מבחוץ.

Our homes are places of intimacy and security. They are drivers of values and identity. But they must not cut us off from the larger world. Our homes, suggest the Hanukkah candles, are in dialogue with the world. Our homes and families have something to say to the world, and the world outside has something vital to say to us. "*Al petach beito mi'bachutz* – at the door of our home from the outside" presents us with the task of finding that perfect balance between inside and out. That may very well be the larger goal and message of Hanukkah.



## David I. Bernstein

*Dr. David I. Bernstein is the Dean of Pardes. He teaches modern Jewish history and contemporary Israel.*

This is a writing exercise based on some of the themes of the upcoming holiday of Hanukkah.

We can celebrate Hanukkah by lighting candles and saying the *Al-Hanisim* prayer, by eating latkes or donuts or by playing dreidel. We can have fun and enjoy the chag. This certainly is important. But we can also add another dimension to the Jewish holidays. We can use the themes of Hanukkah to re-examine ourselves, our lives and see where we are headed.

Hanukkah is often taught as the war of the few against the many; the Jews fighting for religious freedom and independence from the Seleucids. While there are elements of truth to this, it was at least as much a civil war among the different factions of Jews as it was a war of independence.

That internal struggle was characterized by sharply different views on how Jews should relate to Hellenistic culture, then the dominant culture in Mediterranean society. Many favored adopting the “zeitgeist,” the spirit of the times. Some Jews went as far as including idol worship; others rejected any openness to Greek culture. And of course, many Jews found themselves somewhere between these two extreme points of view.

One of the major issues of Hanukkah then, is the question of balance between Judaism and Hellenism in ancient times, and today, between Judaism and Western culture.

We are going to do some self-assessment on a couple of Hanukkah-related issues. In some cases, it will mean trying to be honest about yourself, which is very hard, as many of us know.

1. In terms of Jewish and general studies:  
How many years of secular education do you have?  
How many years of intensive Jewish education?  
How many books have you read this year?  
How many of these were Jewish books?  
What should be the ideal balance between Jewish and general studies?  
Include percentages/qualitative words, in some way, rank importance.



2. Does your own education reflect this? If so, write about how. If not, write about the ways in which it does not.

3. Culture is not only classroom or beit midrash learning. For each of the following cultural categories, evaluate whether you fit your ideal model, or in what ways you fall short: the music I listen to, television / movies, time on the Internet.

4. Another aspect of the conflict between the more Hellenized Jews and the more traditional Jews is the question of interpersonal relations. Ask yourself, how do I relate to other Jews with beliefs and practices different than my own?

5. Rabbi Abraham Isaac haCohen Kook, the first chief rabbi in the Land of Israel wrote that if the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed because of hatred for no reason (שנאת חינם), the redemption will come when Jews practice “love for no reason” (אהבת חינם).

- How can I avoid conflict for those whom I know personally who differ from me in their Jewish practice, and whose views and practices I disagree with?
- How can I increase my “*ahavat Yisrael*” toward all Jews who believe/practice differently than me, that I don’t even know, but that are just stereotypes to me?

**Summary:** We have looked at two issues confronting us from the Hanukkah story – the relationship between Jewish learning and secular culture and how to deal with other Jews whose lifestyle we do not agree with. Whether consciously or not, you have been confronting these issues in one way or another for many years. By thinking more and talking more about these issues around Hanukkah time, we can hopefully make our Hanukkah more meaningful, and hope that it can bring about positive change in us, which is, after all, one of the main things that being a Jew is all about – the constant striving to improve ourselves.

# HANUKAH & THE RHETORIC OF RABBINIC AUTHORITY



## Leah Rosenthal



*Leah Rosenthal has been a master Talmud teacher at Pardes for over 20 years and a pioneer of women's Talmud study in Jerusalem high schools.*

Hanukah and Purim are the two major additions to the Jewish calendar instituted during the classic Rabbinic period. This fact constitutes the background for a brief Talmudic conversation that focuses on the broad question of the theological underpinnings of Rabbinic authority.

### Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 23a

*What blessing is said [over the lighting of Hanukah candles]?*

*This: ... who sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of Hanukah.*

*And where did He command us?*

*R. Avia said: [It follows] from, "Thou shalt not turn aside [from the rulings which they shall instruct thee]." [Deuteronomy 17:11]*

*R. Nehemiah said: "Ask thy father, and he will tell thee; Thine elders, and they will say to thee." [Deuteronomy 32:7]*

מאי מברך?  
מברך: אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה  
והיכן צונו?  
רב אויא אמר מ"לא תסור." (דברים יז, יא)  
רב נחמיה אמר "שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך."  
(דברים לב, ז)

The Talmud, in a wonderfully naive way, halts the conversation regarding the observance of the ritual of candle lighting on Hanukah and wonders about the appropriateness of describing this ritual as God's commandment, as stated

explicitly in the words of the blessing. Surely, this ritual is unquestionably Rabbinic in origin. In response, two answers are presented, each an attempt to clarify the divine nature of Rabbinic ordinances.

The two answers provided in the text are intriguing in their different approaches. The first, R. Avia's answer, cites a verse often associated with the notion of Rabbinic authority. The context of this verse is harsh. The Biblical passage in which this verse appears speaks of institutionalized authority-priests and magistrates who constitute a "Supreme Court" with far-reaching legal powers. The tone is threatening. One must obey and act in accordance with the rulings and verdicts delivered, under threat of death. Obedience is achieved through strict and powerful institutions that represent truth, order and justice within the community.

The second answer is dramatically different. R. Nehemiah offers a verse taken from the song of *Haazinu*. The verse speaks of family relationships – fathers and elders – not formal, communal institutions. The context of this verse speaks of the importance of memory and the significance of the past. In this perspective, authority and the divine nature of tradition flow from the meaning that is created when older generations transmit their stories and wisdom to younger ones. Commitment to tradition stems from the depth of identity that is experienced by the individual. It is a response to a search, a quest for meaning initiated by the seeker, not an obligation imposed upon the individual by the communal institutions that govern.

The festival of Hanukah offers us the opportunity to consider the structures and rhetoric of our Jewish heritage and traditions. As we gather in our homes and communities to celebrate, let us also consider and reconsider the contexts of our traditions and the nature of the bond that exists between us.

# BETWEEN CIVIL WAR & NONVIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS



## Daniel Roth



Rabbi Dr. Daniel Roth is the Director of the Pardes Center for Judaism and Conflict Resolution. He has been teaching advanced rabbinics, Bible, conflict resolution and other subjects at Pardes for over 15 years

The story of Hanukah and the Maccabees is well known. The Greeks banned circumcision, observance of the Sabbath and festivals and the study of Torah (Maccabees I, 1:41-64). Jews were forced to choose between “flight or fight.” Mattathias and his sons, who became known as the Maccabees, chose to form a rebel army and fight for their lives, beliefs and unique identity (Maccabees I, 2). Hanukah – The 25th of Kislev – marked the day the Maccabees purified the Temple and in essence “won” their war.

However, what if instead of engaging in what was to become an extremely bloody and prolonged civil war (roughly 25 years with hundreds of thousands if not millions dead), they chose to accomplish their goals – canceling the discriminatory decrees – through nonviolent demonstrations? Sounds crazy? The following story, also preserved in Talmudic sources, may change your mind:

### Talmud Bavli, Rosh Hashana 19a

*“On the 28th [of Adar] came glad tidings to the Jews that they should not abandon the practice of the Law.”*

*For the Roman Government had issued a decree that they should not study the Torah and that they should not circumcise their sons and that they should profane the Sabbath. What did Judah b. Shammu’a and his colleagues do?*

*They went and consulted a certain Roman noblewoman whom all the Roman notables used to visit. She said to them: “Come and demonstrate at nighttime.” [Rashi: “Demonstrate:” Scream out in the marketplaces and in the streets in order that the [Roman] ministers should hear and have compassion upon you].*

*They went and demonstrated at night, saying, “In heaven’s name, are we not your brothers, are we not the sons of one father? Why are we different from every nation and tongue that you issue such decrees upon us?” The decrees were thereupon canceled.*

*And that day was declared a festive day.”*

בעשרים ותמניא ביה אתת בשורתא טבתא ליהודאי דלא יעידון מאורייתא שגזרה המלכות גזרה שלא יעסקו בתורה ושלא ימולו את בנייהם ושיחללו שבתות מה עשה יהודה בן שמוע וחביריו הלכו ונטלו עצה ממטרוניתא אחת שכל גדולי רומי מצויין אצלה אמרה להם בואו והפגינו בלילה הלכו והפגינו בלילה אמרו אי שמים לא אחיכם אנחנו ולא בני אב אחד אנחנו ולא בני אם אחת אנחנו מה נשתנינו מכל אומה ולשון שאתם גוזרין עלינו גזירות קשות וביטלום ואותו היום עשאוהו יום טוב.

Historians disagree over the historicity of this legend. But, putting that aside, the legend presents an important case-study of transforming a potentially violent situation, similar to that of the Maccabees, into a nonviolent one, through the medium of nonviolent demonstration.

This raises the intriguing historical question of whether the Maccabees could have achieved their goals through nonviolent demonstrations instead of a bloody war. Were there any “third siders,” such as the Roman noblewoman who was well connected and trusted by both Jewish and Roman factions who could assist in de-escalating the situation?

Most importantly, this legend and the story of the Maccabees raise some critical questions for us today. How do we respond when a harsh and discriminatory decree by a government is made against our identity group or others with whom we identify? Who are the trusted “third-siders” to whom we can turn to help in deescalating the situation? When and how can nonviolent demonstrations succeed in canceling such decrees? How do we respond when they cannot?

I pray that through discussing and even arguing over these difficult questions we should merit to light the diverse candles that symbolize nonviolent “disagreements for the sake of Heaven” this Hanukah, and not, God forbid, the violent torches of war and violence.

# SHINING A LIGHT ON OUR HABITS



## Yaffa Epstein



*Rabba Yaffa Epstein serves as the Director of Education, North America for the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. She has taught Talmud, Jewish law and Liturgy at Pardes for over a decade.*

The Talmud in the midst of its conversation regarding lighting Hanukah and Shabbat lights quotes a puzzling statement:

### Talmud Bavli, Shababt 23a

*Rav Hunah said: One who regularly lights a candle will merit to have children who are Torah scholars.*

*One who is meticulous in performing the mitzvah of mezuzah merits a beautiful house on which to affix his mezuzah.*

*One who is meticulous in performing the mitzvah of ritual fringes merits a beautiful garment.*

*One who is meticulous in performing the mitzvah of kiddush of the day merits to fill jugs of wine.*

אמר רב הונא:

הרגיל בנר הויין ליה בנים תלמידי חכמים  
הזהיר במזוזה זוכה לדירה נאה  
הזהיר בציצית זוכה לטלית נאה  
הזהיר בקידוש היום זוכה וממלא גרבי יין.

The lighting of which particular “candle” is rewarded by children who are Torah scholars? Rashi comments that the candle referred to here is that of Shabbat and Hanukah. Other manuscripts specify Hanukah lights alone. But still the question remains, what is the link between lighting candles and studious children?

While there are several answers offered in the commentaries, the answer offered by Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Rotenberg-Alter, the First Rebbe of the Hasidic Dynasty of Ger, is remarkable. He asks us to pay close attention to the language of Rav Hunah in the Gemara. While with the other mitzvot, the word used to describe the mitzvah-action in question is *Hazahir* – one who is meticulous – the phrase used for lighting Hanukah lights is *Haragil* – one who regularly lights. In other words,

this is a regular, constant behavior for a person; it is a habit. To translate it into terms that work in 2017, it is like a person who regularly turns on a light when they walk into a room.

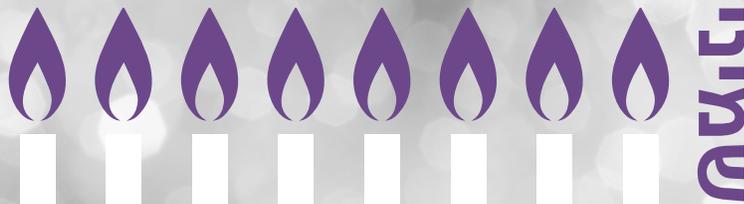
However, the Alter Rebbe continues, and explains there is a hidden explanation in Rav Hunah’s words. He says that it is the job of the lighter להביא ההארה והתחדשות אל ההרגל – to bring light and renewal to the habitual. There is something specific in lighting the Hanukah lights that has the potential to bring newness and freshness to an act that can at times feel so constant, and habitual.

The Sfat Emet, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, the grandson of the Alter Rebbe, continues his grandfather’s line of thinking and explains that this is why one may light Hanukah lights עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק – until people have left the market place. However, he reads this as עד שתכלה הרגל – until regularity has stopped. Again, the job of Hanukah is to shake us up from our regular routines and to make us think about our behavior.

But what is it about Hanukah that actually contains this potential and how does this connect to children? I’d like to suggest that if we look carefully, we can understand that the holiday of Hanukah is inherently connected to the word chinuch – education. They both come from the same root – ח.נ.כ. In the Torah, this word – חנוכה, חנוך – is used to connote a beginning or a dedication. The dedication of the Temple, the education of children, these things are about new beginnings and fresh starts. They are also about commitment and steadfastness to one’s practice.

So in essence, what Hanukah is asking of us is to make a serious commitment. To form real habits that are steeped in Jewish tradition, but not to allow these habits to become dull, routine or meaningless. The real work of Hanukah is to continue to infuse our commitments with light and with new potential. And so, this Hanukah, as we kindle our lights, may we bring our full selves, and commit to bring more light and more consciousness to bear on our behavior.

# FIRE: BURNING OR ILLUMINATING?



## Alex Israel



Rabbi Alex Israel teaches Bible and is the Director of the Pardes Community Education Program and Summer Program. He recently published his book I Kings – Torn in Two.

In Mishnaic times, there were two traditions of how to light the Hanukah candles:

### Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b

*Beit Shammai say: On the first day one kindles eight lights and, from there on, gradually decreases the number of lights until, on the last day of Hanukah, one light is kindled. And Beit Hillel say: On the first day one kindles one light, and from there on, gradually increases the number of lights until, on the last day, eight lights are kindled.*

ת"ר מצות חנוכה ... ב"ש אומרים יום ראשון מדליק שמנה מכאן ואילך פוחת והולך וב"ה אומרים יום ראשון מדליק אחת מכאן ואילך מוסיף והולך.

Beit Shammai's opinion is to light eight candles on the first night and descend to a single candle. Beit Hillel, the tradition we follow, starts with a single candle and increases daily to eight on the final day.

What is the basis of this dispute? Rav S.Y Zevin (20th Cent) explains it in the following manner: Do we perceive fire as something that illuminates or as something that burns and consumes?

Fire gives light. Hanukah comes when the days are short and dark, and a single candle dispels much darkness. Torah too is compared to light (Prov 6:23), as is the human soul: "the light of God is the soul of Man." (Prov 20:27) The ideals we hold dear as humans and Jews have the power to illuminate, inspire and give meaning to our personal lives and

our national ethos, to brighten and show the way to creating a better world.

But fire also has the capacity to burn and destroy. From this angle, fire represents the social mandate to fight against and expunge forces of evil, corruption, violence and harmfulness. In a personal sense, sometimes we have areas of our personal lives that are so toxic they too need to be eradicated.

And here, Beit Shammai and Hillel disagree. Beit Hillel argue that when one generates more light, when we increase the goodness in the world, hate and ugliness are forced into retreat. Each day, as another candle is added, a momentum of increasing light is created that dispels the darkness. But Beit Shammai disagree. We cannot just rely on the positive to fight the negative. One cannot raise oneself, one cannot move forward in society, until one expunges the harmful, the pain and the violence that surround and suppress goodness. Fire burns the evil around us so that by the end of Hanukah, wickedness is consumed. As evil dies down, so do the flames that consume it, and as such, the eight candles are reduced to a single flame. Then, true goodness can emerge.

Hanukah marks the battle between Judaism and Hellenism, a struggle that threatened the very survival of Judaism. When we are confronted by threats to our vision of truth, do we fight and battle the forces that endanger our future, or do we build, expand and bolster the values we hold dear so that their positive energy overwhelms the negative forces that confront us.

Light or burn? Interesting!

We follow Beit Hillel. Do you agree?



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