
THE WEISS EDITION

חנוכה

Hanukkah



Not Just a War of Ideas

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Inextinguishable Lights

Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה

לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ת ניסן ב"ר יוחנן ע"ה

גארדאן

נלב"ע ביום ל' כסלו ה'תש"נ

תנצב"ה

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נדפס ע"י

בנו הרה"ת אריה לייב

וזוגתו מרת אסתר שיחיו

גארדאן

בְּשַׁעֲמֻדָּה מִלְכוּת יוֹן הִרְשָׁעָה עַל עַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל

When the evil Hellenic kingdom rose up against Your people Israel...

Text of V'Al Hanissim | נוסח ועל הניסים

Not Just a War of Ideas

It is strange that the ancient Greeks became such sworn enemies of the Jews, to the point of all-out war and an attempt to wipe out the Jewish faithful entirely. The empires of ancient Greece were centers of academia and scholarship, which should have made them natural friends of the Jews, who have always been steeped in the study of the Torah, known for its “wisdom and discernment, evident to the eyes of the nations.”¹ The devastating conflict suggests that their common pursuit of scholarship was, in fact, so unlike that it only served to further pit the Greeks against the Jews.

The Midrash remarks: “If a man should say to you: ‘There is wisdom among the nations,’ believe it. ... If a man should say: ‘There is Torah among the nations,’ do not believe it.”²

What is the difference between the two?

Wisdom is enlightenment, whereas Torah is instruction.³

The Greeks celebrated wisdom; they contemplated the nature of all things, what is good and what is bad, what is beneficial and what is not. But their intellectual achievement was a goal unto itself, independent of its effect on their

1. Devarim 4:6.

2. Eicha Rabbah 2:13.

3. Zohar III, p. 53b.

integrity and conduct. Their studies did not compel their behavior one way or another.

The Jewish approach to the Torah's wisdom, however, is predicated on the belief that G-d's expectations concerning how we conduct our lives are found in that knowledge. We therefore celebrate the Torah's *instruction*; we seek the Torah's insight on the universe and the human experience not for mere academic rigor, but in order to know what G-d demands of us in any given situation.

Aside from the obvious gap between these two attitudes toward scholarship, the outcome of the Greek approach was a nation driven by selfish greed and lust. When Jewish practice clashed with Greek interests, the Greeks responded with total intolerance and disregard for the ethical rights of other human beings.

The Jewish nation's miraculous triumph in their battle against the Greeks was the victory of the Torah—the wisdom that illuminates, educates, and elevates our way of life.

—*Sichos Kodesh 5731, vol. 1, pp. 343-346*

בֵּית שְׁמַאי אוֹמְרִים: יוֹם רֵאשׁוֹן מְדֻלֵּק שְׁמֹנֶה, מִכָּאן וְאֵילָךְ
 פּוֹחֶת וְהוֹלֵךְ. וּבֵית הֵלֵל אוֹמְרִים: יוֹם רֵאשׁוֹן מְדֻלֵּק אַחַת,
 מִכָּאן וְאֵילָךְ מוֹסִיף וְהוֹלֵךְ. . . טַעֲמָא דְּבֵית שְׁמַאי כְּנֻגָּד
 יָמִים הַנִּכְנָסִין, וְטַעֲמָא דְּבֵית הֵלֵל כְּנֻגָּד יָמִים הַיוֹצְאִין.

Beis Shammai says: On the first day one kindles eight lamps and, from there on, gradually decreases the number of lights. Beis Hillel says: On the first day one kindles one light, and from there on, gradually increases The reason for Beis Shammai's opinion is that the number of lights corresponds to the incoming days, i.e., the future. The reason for Beis Hillel's opinion is that the number of lights corresponds to the outgoing days.

Talmud, Shabbos 21b | שבת כא:

Before They Hatch

The schools of thought of Shammai and Hillel are known for their vigorous debates throughout the Talmud. Apart from a select few instances,¹ *Beis Shammai*, the school of Shammai, is generally stricter in its interpretation and application of the law, while *Beis Hillel* is more prone to leniency. When it comes to their debate concerning the pattern of lighting the Chanukah lamps—whether to kindle eight lights on the first night and gradually decrease (*Beis Shammai*), or to kindle one on the first night and gradually increase (*Beis Hillel*), ultimately the same number of lamps are kindled

1. See Mishnah, *Eduyos* chs. 4 and 5.

regardless. Nevertheless, here too *Beis Shammai's* opinion is more “demanding” than *Beis Hillel's*.

The Talmud explains the debate (according to one answer) as a question of whether the Chanukah lights should demonstrate how many days of Chanukah have already passed, or how many are still to come. Taken a step further, this debate can be said to reflect our Sages' perspective on the original miracle of Chanukah, when a cruse of oil sufficient for only one day burned for eight days instead. On the one hand, we could say that the miracle grew from day to day with the oil burning yet another day. On the other hand, when considering the miracle after the fact, we could say that all eight days were contained in that single jug of oil from the get-go. From that perspective, the amount of days of “miraculous potential” contained in that single cruse was greatest on the first day, gradually diminishing as the days passed and fewer miracle days were necessary.

Therein lies the “leniency” of *Beis Hillel* and the “stringency” of *Beis Shammai*. The average person, argued *Beis Hillel*, can only be expected to acknowledge and give public thanks for G-d's miracles once they have visibly materialized. As such, *Beis Hillel* recommended lighting the menorah in a way that reflects how each additional step was seen as the miracle unfolded. *Beis Shammai*, however, demanded that the average person recognize G-d's miracles even when they are still in potential form and have not yet fully materialized.

--*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 30, p. 301

בֵּית שְׁמַאי אוֹמְרִים: יוֹם רֵאשׁוֹן מְדֻלֵּק שְׁמֹנֶה, מִכָּאן וְאֵילָךְ
 פּוֹחֶת וְהוֹלֵךְ. וּבֵית הֵלֵל אוֹמְרִים: יוֹם רֵאשׁוֹן מְדֻלֵּק אַחַת,
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 פְּרִי הַחֹג, וְטַעֲמָא דְּבֵית הֵלֵל דְּמַעְלִין בְּקֹדֶשׁ וְאִין מוֹרִידִין.

Beis Shammai says: On the first day one kindles eight lamps and, from there on, gradually decreases the number of lights. Beis Hillel says: On the first day one kindles one light, and from there on, gradually increases ... Beis Shammai's opinion is that the gradually diminishing number corresponds to the bulls of the festival of Sukkos. Beis Hillel's opinion is based on the principle: One rises to a higher level in matters of sanctity and one does not descend.

Talmud, Shabbos 21b | שבת כא:

Where to Begin?

The Talmud¹ famously relates that Shammai's expectations of individuals on the journey toward living authentic Jewish lives were more exacting than Hillel's.

A similar idea is expressed in the debate between the schools of thought of Shammai and Hillel whether to light eight lamps on the first night and gradually diminish (*Beis Shammai*), or to light one on the first night and gradually increase (*Beis Hillel*). According to one explanation in the Talmud, *Beis Shammai's* opinion reflects the pattern in which the 70 bull offerings were brought to the Temple over the course of the seven days of Sukkos: the greatest number of

1. *Shabbos 31a*

bulls was offered on the first day, with the number consistently decreasing on each of the subsequent six days, whereas *Beis Hillel's* idea of gradual increase reflects the constant ascension demanded in all matters of holiness.

The Chanukah lamps, which commemorate the rededication of the *Beis Hamikdash* after it was defiled by the Greeks, represent the steps a person must take when seeking to return to the Divine service, after his inner *Beis Hamikdash* has become less pure than it should be.

The 70 bull offerings correspond to the 70 nations of the world; the gradual decrease in the offerings over the holiday of Sukkos is explained by our Sages as representing the mitigation of the nations' harmful ways and the atonement of their sins.² According to *Beis Shammai*, the first thing a person must do when ready to genuinely serve G-d is rid himself of his internal ills and debasement, which is highly challenging at the start and requires tremendous strength and spiritual energy—symbolized by light, but eventually becomes easier as the negative becomes lessened.

Beis Hillel, however, tells the person desiring to rededicate himself not to wait until he has completed all the heavy lifting and cleansing. Instead, he should begin with a small holy act, and gradually increase the amount of energy he invests in good and positive things, until he is shining brightly and eventually will dispel all darkness and negativity.

--*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 30, p. 302

2. See Talmud, *Sukkah* 55b; Yalkut Shimoni, *Parshas Pinchas*

ת"ר נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו מבחוץ
... ובשעת הסכנה מניחה על שלחנו ודיו

*It is a mitzvah to place the Chanukah lamp by the door
of one's house on the outside ... In times of danger one
places it on the table, and that is sufficient.*

Talmud, Shabbos 21b | שבת כא:

Inextinguishable Lights

It is rare for the Talmud to include instructions on how a mitzvah can still be observed in times of crisis within the original outline of the mitzvah's basic rules, making this one particularly noteworthy: "In times of danger one places it on the table, and that is sufficient." The indication at the very core of the mitzvah is its inability to be disturbed by a change of circumstance. It is equally accessible in times of difficulty and times of wellbeing.

Similarly, Ramban writes that the Chanukah lights are, in a certain sense, superior to those kindled in the *Beis Hamikdash*.¹ How so? The lights of the Menorah were dimmed with the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* and the subsequent exile of the Jewish people from our homeland. The lights of Chanukah, however, remain unaffected by *galus* and continue for all times.

These ideas express the symbolism of the Chanukah lights as something eternal and immutable—namely, the Jewish soul's unbreakable attachment to G-d. An integral component of the mitzvah is therefore the method in which the lighting of

1. *Bamidbar* 8:2.

the Chanukah lamps can be observed under *all* circumstances, even when surrounded by physical threats. Moreover, the constancy of the mitzvah, which can be fully observed even in exile, highlights the fact that even darkness caused by our own misdeeds (such as our sins that brought about the exile²) can never weaken the power of the Chanukah lights. For the lights of Chanukah represent the Jewish soul's attachment to G-d, a bond that can never be broken.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 3, p. 818

2. As we say in our prayers, "וּמִפְּנֵי חַטֹּאתֵינוּ גָּלוּנוּ מֵאֶרֶצֵנוּ," "But because of our sins, we were exiled from our land."

לעילוי נשמת
האשה היקרה ובעלת מרץ

מרת **מרים** ע"ה

בת הו"ח אי"א ר' **דובער** ומרת **רישא** ז"ל

פלטיאל גרדאן

מקושרת לכ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש
שימשה כשלוחה במשך עשירות בשנים
בעלת אמונה בטחון ואהבת ה'

נפטרה יום ב' דחנוכה
כ"ו כסלו ה'תשפ"ו

תנצב"ה

לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ת **ישראל**

ב"ר **שמואל הכהן** ע"ה

לאפיין

נלב"ע ביום כ"ו כסלו נר ב' דחנוכה ה'תשע"ז

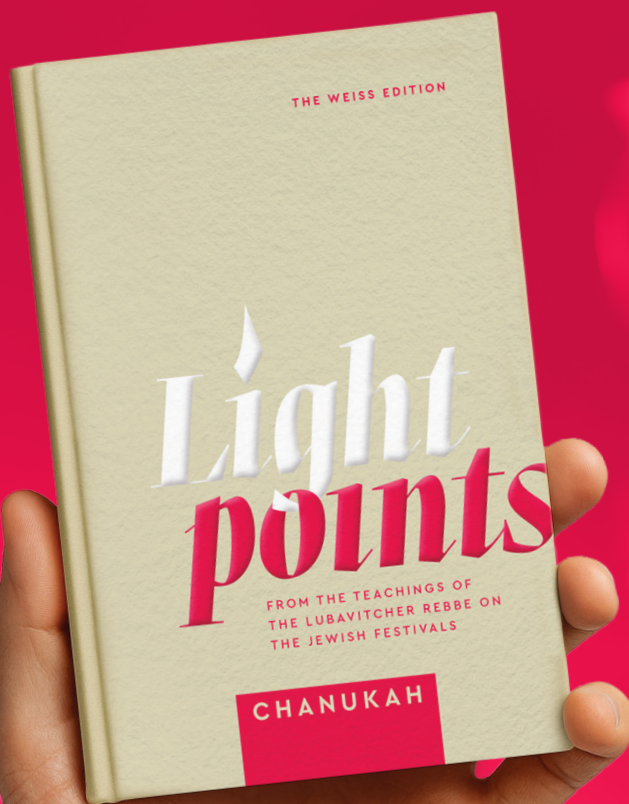
תנצב"ה

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