

Shabbat 12 December 2015 – Chanukah-Miketz

How many Chanukah Teachings can I squeeze out?

When one thinks about the festival of Chanukah, the first thing that comes to mind is the Mitzvah to kindle the Chanukah lights. In fact the Talmud in Shabbat 21b, one of the primary sources of the festival, defines Chanukah as being mainly commemorative not just of the military victory but predominantly the miracle of the oil in the Menorah that took place in the temple, which wondrously lasted for eight days. What message are the candles trying to relate?

There are a number of laws concerning the Menorah that I think point directly to every single one of us.

- We kindle the lights in ascending order. Meaning we follow the ruling according to the opinion of Bet Hillel who says that on the first night we light one candle and each night we increase until we come to the last night when we light eight. As opposed to Bet Shammai who says we kindle in descending order.
- Candles should be lit after dark (except on Erev Shabbat when we cannot light on Shabbat, yet we put enough oil in our containers to last well into night)
- They should ideally be lit when people are around in order to publicise the miracle to the greatest extent.
- The candles should be kindled at the entrance way to our houses, illuminating the outside.

And the message...

- One of the reasons given in the Talmud for following the opinion of Bet Hillel that we kindle the Menorah in ascending order is that we “Always ascend in

Holiness we do not descend". Important lesson, we do not stand still in Judaism, we're always on the up.

- The candles should be lit after dark. Meaning, it's up to us to illuminate the darkness. Strike a match in a darkened room, and from all recesses of the room the light may be seen. You think you cannot make a difference because it is so dark and cold out there, Chanukah says you can.
- The Menorah is lit when people are around, and in the entrance way to our homes in order to teach us not to become isolated in our Judaism but to share it with our fellow Jews to the greatest degree. Don't be an ostrich, Judaism is for all Jews, share it with them.

An illuminating Chanukah!!