

Chanukah Ritual Text Study

RM by Rabbi Aaron Melman

Shabbat 21b:7

שבת כ"א ב:ז'

Rabba bar bar Hana said that Rabbi Yohanan said: There were two Elders in Sidon, and one of them acted in accordance with the opinion of Beit Shammai, and one of them acted in accordance with the opinion of Beit Hillel. Each provided a reason for his actions: One gave a reason for his actions: The number of lights corresponds to the bulls of the Festival. And one gave a reason for his actions: The number of lights is based on the principle: One elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity and one does not downgrade.

אָמַר רַבָּה בַּר בַּר חַנָּה אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: שְׁנֵי זְקֵנִים הָיוּ בְּצִידוֹן. אֶחָד עָשָׂה כְּבֵית שְׁמַאי וְאֶחָד עָשָׂה כְּדַבְּרֵי בֵּית הַלֵּל. זֶה נוֹתֵן טַעַם לְדַבְּרָיו כְּנֶגֶד פְּרֵי הַחֵג, וְזֶה נוֹתֵן טַעַם לְדַבְּרָיו דְּמַעְלִין בְּקֹדֶשׁ וְאִין מוֹרִידִין.

Shabbat 21b

שבת כ"א ב

The Gemara asks: **What is Hanukkah, and why are lights kindled on Hanukkah?** The Gemara answers: **The Sages taught in Megillat Ta'anit: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the days of Hanukkah are eight. One may not eulogize on them and one may not fast on them. What is the reason? When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary by touching them. And when the Hasmonean monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil**

מֵאֵי חֲנוּכָּה? דִּתְנוּ רַבָּנָן: בְּכ"ה בְּכֶסֶלִיו יוֹמֵי דְחֲנוּכָּה תִּמְנֵיאַ אֵינּוּן דְּלֹא לְמִסְפַּד בְּהוֹן וְדִלֹא לְהִתְעַנּוֹת בְּהוֹן. שְׁכַשְׁנִכְנִסוּ יְוֹנִים לְהִיכֹל טַמְאוּ כָּל הַשְּׁמֵנִים שְׁבִיהִיכֹל. וּכְשֶׁגָּבְרָה מְלָכוֹת בֵּית חֲשְׁמוֹנָאִי וְנִצְחָהוּם, בְּדָקוּ וְלֹא מָצְאוּ אֶלָּא פֶּדֶ אֶחָד שֶׁל שֶׁמֶן שֶׁהָיָה מוֹנַח בְּחֻתְמוֹ שֶׁל כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל, וְלֹא הָיָה בוֹ אֶלָּא לְהִדְלִיק יוֹם אֶחָד. נַעֲשֶׂה בוֹ גַם וְהִדְלִיקוּ מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁמוֹנֶה יָמִים. לְשָׁנָה

that was placed with the seal of the High Priest, undisturbed by the Greeks. And there was sufficient oil there to light the candelabrum for only one day. A miracle occurred and they lit the candelabrum from it eight days. The next year the Sages instituted those days and made them holidays with recitation of *hallel* and special thanksgiving in prayer and blessings.

Mishneh Torah, Scroll of Esther and Hanukkah 4:12

The precept of lighting the *Hanukkah* lamp is exceedingly precious, and one should carefully observe it in order to acclaim the miracle, ever praising and thanking God for the miracles which he has performed for us. Even if one has nothing to eat except what he gets from charity, he should borrow, or sell his garment, to buy oil and lamps and light them.

Bava Kamma 62b:2

In the case of a camel that was laden with flax and was passing through the public domain, and its flax extended into a store and the flax caught fire from a lamp in the store belonging to the storekeeper, and as a result of the burning flax the camel set fire to the building together with all its contents, the owner of the camel is liable. But if the storekeeper placed his lamp outside,

אַחֲרַת קִבְעוּם וְעִשְׂאוּם יָמִים טוֹבִים בְּהִלָּל
וְהוֹדָאָה

משנה תורה, הלכות מגילה וחנוכה ד:י"ב
מִצְוֹת נֵר חֲנֻכָּה מִצְוָה חֲבִיבָה הִיא עַד מְאֹד
וְצָרִיךְ אָדָם לְהִזְהָר בָּהּ כְּדֵי לְהוֹדִיעַ הַנֶּס
וְלְהוֹסִיף בְּשִׁבַח הָאֵל וְהוֹדִיָּה לוֹ עַל הַנֶּסִּים
שֶׁעָשָׂה לָנוּ. אִפְלוּ אֵין לוֹ מָה יֵאָכֵל אֶלָּא מִן
הַצְדָּקָה שׁוֹאֵל אוֹ מוֹכֵר כְּסוּתוֹ וְלוֹקֵחַ שָׁמֶן
וְנִירוֹת וּמְדַלֵּיק:

בבא קמא ס"ב ב:ב'

גמל שהיה טעון פשתן ועבר ברשות הרבים
ונכנס פשתנו לתוך החנות ודלקו בנרו של
חנוני והדליק את הבירה בעל גמל חייב
הניח חנוני נרו מבחוץ החנוני חייב רבי
יהודה אומר בנר חנוכה פטור:

thereby causing the flax on the camel to catch fire, and consequently the building was set on fire, **the storekeeper is liable. Rabbi Yehuda says: In** a case where the lamp placed outside was **a Hanukkah lamp**, the storekeeper is **exempt**, since it is a mitzva for a Hanukkah lamp to be placed outside.

Introductions to the Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat, Summary of Perek II 2

The comprehensive discussion of the Hanukkah lights found in this chapter, which, in effect, included all the halakhot of Hanukkah, underscored the role of the Shabbat lights. The conclusion was that, in virtually every matter, there is a contrast between Hanukkah lights and Shabbat lights. The objective of the mitzva to kindle the Shabbat lights is to illuminate. The mitzva of kindling the Hanukkah lights has no such practical objective; the mitzva is the act of kindling itself. The Shabbat lights are kindled so that the entire family can derive benefit from them. It is prohibited to derive benefit from the Hanukkah candles at all. Consequently, the Shabbat lamp must be equipped with materials that burn clearly and consistently. There is no such requirement for the Hanukkah candles. Their sole purpose is to publicize the miracle of Hanukkah.

Mishneh Torah, Scroll of Esther and
Hanukkah 3:1-3

(1) During the period of the second Temple, when the Greek kings were in power, they proclaimed decrees against the Jewish people, abrogating their religion and forbidding them to study the Torah or to perform the divine precepts. They laid their hands on their wealth and their daughters; they entered the Temple and broke through it, defiling the things that were pure. The people of Israel were sorely distressed by their enemies, who

משנה תורה, הלכות מגילה וחנוכה ג'א-ג'
(א) בְּבֵית שְׁנֵי כְּשִׁמְלֵי יוֹן גָּזְרוּ גְזֵרוֹת עַל
יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִטְלוּ דָתָם וְלֹא הִנִּיחוּ אוֹתָם לְעֶסֶק
בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוֹת. וּפְשָׁטוּ יָדָם בְּמַמּוֹנִים
וּבְבָנוֹתֵיהֶם וּנְכַסּוּ לְהִיכֵל וּפְרָצוּ בוֹ פְּרָצוֹת
וּטְמְאוּ הַטְּהָרוֹת. וְצָר לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל מְאֹד
מִפְּנֵיהֶם וּלְחֻצוֹם לַחֵץ גָּדוֹל עַד שֶׁרַחֲמִים
עָלִיהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְהוֹשִׁיעָם מִיָּדָם
וְהִצִּילֵם וַגְּבְרוּ בְּנֵי חֲשִׁמוֹנַי הַכְּהֻנִּים
הַגְּדוֹלִים וְהִרְגוּם וְהוֹשִׁיעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיָּדָם

oppressed them ruthlessly until the God of our fathers took pity, saved and rescued them from the hands of the tyrants. The Hasmonean great priests won victories, defeating the Syrian Greeks and saving Israel from their power. They set up a king from among the priests and Israel's kingdom was restored for a period of more than two centuries, until the destruction of the second Temple.

(2) When, on the twenty-fifth of *Kislev*, the Jews had emerged victorious over their foes and destroyed them, they re-entered the Temple where they found only one jar of pure oil, enough to be lit for only a single day; yet they used it for lighting the required set of lamps for eight days, until they managed to press olives and produce pure oil.

(3) Because of this, the sages of that generation ruled that the eight days beginning with the twenty-fifth of *Kislev* should be observed as days of rejoicing and praising the Lord. Lamps are lit in the evening over the doors of the homes, on each of the eight nights, so as to display the miracle. These days are called *Hanukkah*, when it is forbidden to lament or to fast, just as it is on the days of *Purim*. Lighting the lamps during the eight days of *Hanukkah* is a religious duty imposed by the sages, like the reading of the *Megillah* on *Purim*.

וְהַעֲמִידוּ מֶלֶךְ מִן הַכֹּהֲנִים וְחִזְרָה מַלְכוּת
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵתֵר עַל מְאֵתִים שָׁנָה עַד הַחֲרָבָן
הַשְּׁנִי:

(ב) וּכְשֶׁגָּבְרוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל אוֹיְבֵיהֶם וְאֲבָדוּם
בְּכ"ה בַּחֹדֶשׁ כִּסְלוֹ הָיָה וְנִכְנְסוּ לַהֵיכָל וְלֹא
מָצְאוּ שָׁמֶן טְהוֹר בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ אֶלָּא פֶדֶד אֶחָד
וְלֹא הָיָה בּוֹ לְהַדְלִיק אֶלָּא יוֹם אֶחָד בְּלִבָּד
וְהַדְלִיקוּ מִמֶּנּוּ נִרוֹת הַמְעַרְכָּה שְׁמוֹנֶה יָמִים
עַד שֶׁכִּתְּשׂוּ זֵיתִים וְהוֹצִיאוּ שָׁמֶן טְהוֹר:

(ג) וּמִפְּנֵי זֶה הִתְקִינוּ חֻכְמִים שְׁבָאוֹתוֹ הַדּוֹר
שֶׁיְהִיוּ שְׁמוֹנֶת הַיָּמִים הָאֵלּוּ שְׁתַּחֲלֹתָן כ"ה
בְּכִסְלוֹ יְמֵי שְׂמִחָה וְהַלֵּל וּמְדַלְּקִין בָּהֶן
הַנִּרוֹת בְּעֶרְבַּי עַל פְּתַחֵי הַבָּתִּים בְּכָל לַיְלָה
וְלַיְלָה מִשְׁמוֹנֶת הַלַּיְלוֹת לְהִרְאוֹת וּלְגַלוֹת
הַנֶּסֶם. וַיָּמִים אֵלּוּ הֵן הַנִּקְרָאִין חֲנֻכָּה וְהֵן
אֲסוּרִין בְּהִסָּפֵד וְתַעֲנִית פִּימֵי הַפּוֹרִים.
וְהַדְּלָקַת הַנִּרוֹת בָּהֶן מִצְוָה מִדְּבַרֵי סוֹפְרִים
בְּקִרְיַת הַמְּגִלָּה:

Mishneh Torah, Scroll of Esther and
Hanukkah 4:1

(1) How many lamps should one light on Chanukah? It is a commandment that one light be kindled in each and every house whether it be a household with many people or a house with a single person. One who enhances the commandment should light lamps according to the number of people of the house — a lamp for each and every person, whether they are men or women. One who enhances [it] further than this and performs the commandment in the choicest manner lights a lamp for each person on the first night and continues to add one lamp on each and every night.

משנה תורה, הלכות מגילה וחנוכה ד:א'
(א) כַּמֶּה נְרוֹת הוּא מְדַלֵּק בְּחִנּוּכָה. מְצֻנָּה
שְׂיֵהֶיָה כָּל בַּיִת וּבַיִת מְדַלֵּק גַּר אֶחָד בֵּין
שְׂהִיו אַנְשֵׁי הַבַּיִת מְרַבִּין בֵּין שְׁלֹא הָיָה בוֹ
אֶלָּא אָדָם אֶחָד. וְהַמְהַדֵּר אֶת הַמְצֻנָּה
מְדַלֵּק נְרוֹת כְּמִנּוּן אַנְשֵׁי הַבַּיִת גַּר לְכָל אֶחָד
וְאֶחָד בֵּין אַנְשִׁים בֵּין גְּשִׁים. וְהַמְהַדֵּר יוֹתֵר
עַל זֶה וְעוֹשֶׂה מְצֻנָּה מִן הַמְבַּחֵר מְדַלֵּק גַּר
לְכָל אֶחָד בַּלַּיְלָה הָרִאשׁוֹן וּמוֹסִיף וְהוֹלֵךְ
בְּכָל לַיְלָה וּלְיֵלָה גַּר אֶחָד: