

PARSHAS MIKETZ

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

Bet Shammai teach that we commence by lighting eight lights and then decrease them each night by one till on the eighth day only one candle is lit, whereas according to Bet Hillel the lights are lit in an ascending order so that on the eighth day all eight candles are lit. The former opinion relates to the 70 bulls offered on Sukkot in a descending order while Bet Hillel based them-selves on the concept that one always increases holiness, thus rising from 1 to 8.

We need to explain the parallel with the sacrifices that were offered for the 70 nations of the world, since the lights of Hanukkah are not lit on their behalf. The Greek were arrogant because of the strength of their belief in their own knowledge and their intelligence, and this was the crux of their war against the Jews (Maharal). Aristotle and his students believed that everything that they were unable to understand or to achieve through their intelligence was not true. [In essence this is the struggle between Humanism and religious faith that has existed since the 17th century. Such a belief, all too often, creates amongst its holders a disdain for all other opinions and forms of knowledge that is expressed in intolerance and arrogance. Everything, except their knowledge is primitive, illogical and deserves to be destroyed.] In order to correct the arrogance and gassut ruach of the Greeks all that had to be done was to remove the shell of impudence and arrogance and thereby reveal the beneficial aspects of secular knowledge and science through the light of Torah. So on the first day we need to light all eight candles because when Israel defeated them materially it was necessary to establish this spiritual light instead of the evil of the Nachash that remained in the hearts of some people of Israel. After the first great effort the arrogance diminishes and now in order to purify it one does not need so much light and we can diminish the candles. This is the same as the bulls of the festival since each day the strength of evil in the nations of the world is diminished by our sacrifices. Bet Hillel explain that as the arrogance of the Greeks is diminished each day, the light of the Torah is increasingly revealed and we symbolically therefore add each night one light.

Actually, this discussion between the two schools reflects their two different ways of worshiping Hashem. Elsewhere the Shem Mi Shmuel relates this issue also to the following mishnah. 'Reflect on three things and you will not come into sin. From whence you come, to where you go

and before whom you are destined to give a reckoning. We come from a putrid drop, we go [after death] to a place of dust decay and vermin, and give reckoning before the Supreme King of Kings' (Avot, Chapter 3, mishnah 1). The second sentence is the way that minimizes and denigrates the spiritual abilities of the human being and stresses their weaknesses and valueless existence. Such a

way prevents arrogance and promotes humility and flows from the emphasis on din-Bet Shammai. However, at the same time it has a certain ????? since it can lead to a feeling of despair and depression that opens the door to sin and evil. Such feelings can easily lead people to come to sin. If people are indeed without spiritual value and there is little worth in their actions, then there is little reason to avoid sin as everything is pointless and valueless. The first sentence of the mishnah, however, is according to Bet Hillel. They teach that a person should see the greatness of G-d, His unlimited wisdom and power, and His kindness then one will immediately be filled with the fear and awareness of G-d even as explained by Maimonides (Yesodei HaTorah, chapter 2, halakhah 2). From this is impossible for anyone to come to arrogance, yet without despair since we are the image of G-d. We see that the Torah insisted that the oil of the Menorah should be from pure olive oil without any residue or impurity. This is the way of Bet Hillel whereas that of Bet Shammai contains residue as we have explained.

[The following was said at the celebration of his son Aharon Israel beginning to learn chumash]. The mitzvah of chinuch is to train a person in the ways of Torah. However, there is a danger that their performance may become mechanical and purely technical without spirituality or elevation.[The Baal Shem Tov once said, ' If you are the same after you davened as you were before, then did you daven '? The whole of school of Pshyischa was very emphatic about avoiding this danger and therefore they taught that the preparation for performing a mitzvah was as important as the actual mitzvah, since it prevented this mechanical attitude]. This then is the major purpose of chinuch to make sure that a person sees his study and his actions as being new every day. When they defeated the Greeks, they began their worship with the chinuch of the altar and the Menorah thereby lighting the way that every year there would be a awakening of the heart and the soul, and the chinuch to begin the service of G-d anew. That is why Bet Hillel said that the lights should be added to every night. This is why Hanukkah always occurs when we read the story of Joseph, because his greatness is in that he was able always to renew his way of worship. For this reason we are told that, '?????? ??-????'. Without this ability and chinuch he would never have been able to exist spiritually in Egypt; after all the rabbis taught that a person's yetzer renews itself every day and therefore one's learning and observance should be renewed likewise.

Rabbi Asi asked, ' Why do the children start learning Torah with Torah Cohanim and not from Bereishit? This is because the children are pure and the worship in Vayikrah is also pure; the pure shall come and busy them-selves with purity (Midrash, Vayikrah Rabbah,chapter 4). The Avnei Nezer said that the essence of the sacrifices is to be fulfilled in the future. After Mankind will have purified and perfected them-selves, then they will also be able to purify and perfect the animals. The Master Menachem Mendel of Kotsk said that the study of Seder Kodshim in the Mishnah, that deals with the sacrifices helps to purify the mind of the student. The Chidushei HaRim of Gur explained these sayings by observing that the study of Kodshim requires pure and holy thoughts. Then to the extent that one brings purity and holiness to this study, their thoughts and ideas become even more pure and holy.

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