

## Vayeishev – Chanukah 5772

Rabbi Aharon Ziegelr

This coming Tuesday night we light the first candle of Ner Chanukah [according to Bet Hillel] and recite the three Berachot.

The Gemara Shabbat [21b] records a mach'loket [dispute] between Bet Shamai and Bet Hillel concerning the number of candles to be lit every night. According to Bet Shamai we begin with eight candles on the first night and decrease one every subsequent night, leaving us with but one candle to be lit on the last night. According to Bet Hillel we begin with one candle on the first night, so that we light eight candles on the last night, and that is our minhag.

The Gemara then continues with a machloket among the Amora'im pertaining to the Halachic reasoning and rationale between Bet Hillel and Bet Shamai. Rav Soloveitchik suggested that we look at the machloket from a conceptual perspective on how to view the miracles of HaShem on our behalf.

According to Bet Shamai, the candles express our shevach [praise] to HaShem for rescuing us from our predicament. We needed a miracle to supply us with pure, uncontaminated oil for the Bet HaMikdash, until a new batch could be prepared in a week's time. The urgency of this need decreased with each day that passed because we were that much closer to producing our own oil. Hence, argues Bet Shamai, we should decrease the number of candles every night as a true reflection of our diminished predicament.

Bet Hillel argues, that we offer shevach not as a reflection of a diminished danger but rather as an appreciation of HaShem's miracle. With each day that passed, the greatness of His miracle was enhanced, for a small amount of oil, enough for a one day supply, lasted beyond that one day, and continued to last for the duration of eight days. The peoples awe intensified with each day, and thus, our candles reflect those propitious moments, by increasing the number of candles each subsequent day.

Since the Halacha follows Bet Hillel, we must always look upon the daily miracles that HaShem perform on our behalf NOT in terms of our needs, but in terms of the greatness and kindness that HaShem bestows upon us. Getting through a journey, be it a flight, a drive or even a walk that seemed uneventful to us, should not diminish our expression of gratitude and heartfelt thanks, when we reach our destination in safety and peace. For we do not always see and we are not aware of the dangers that lurked in our paths and who knows what could have happened if not for our Guardian above, whose miracles protected us. We should not say less Tehilim or give less Tzeddaka when we arrive safely just because the trip was uneventful.

With gratitude to HaShem, and with the help of HaShem our drive from Brooklyn to Florida was safe and uneventful. During those two days of driving we learned a great deal of Jewish history because we had Rabbi Berel Wein with us- ON CD Tapes.

Mazal Tov to Fred and Janet Rivenson on the engagement of their daughter in Israel.