

Breaking Through A Dark Place In Your Life

There are two opinions as to how we should light the Chanukah candles.¹

According to Beis Hillel, we light one on the first night and we add an additional candle every night, until the eighth night when we light eight. What is the reason? Because we add in holiness and we don't subtract.

According to Beis Shamai, we light eight the first night and we subtract one on each of the subsequent nights, until the eighth night when we light one. What is the reason? Because it is like the bulls that were offered in the Temple on Sukkos, on the first day they offered thirteen, and on every subsequent day they offered one less.²

Now we light the Chanukah candles according to Beis Hillel, but when Moshiach comes we will follow the ruling of Beis Shamai.³

My daughter asked this question.

Why would we light the Chanukah candles according to Beis Shamai when Moshiach comes? Why would we ever light them according to Beis Shamai, isn't it subtracting light? It doesn't make sense!

The answer. According to Beis Hillel the light of yesterday doesn't exist today, because now that we are in exile, the way we see things is that the light doesn't last. So we have to add every night.

When Moshiach comes we will see the truth that the light we make in the world is really everlasting. So if we light eight the first night according to Beis Shamai, the second night all the light from the first night is still there, so you don't have to add so many lights to show a greater amount of light, there only has to be seven more the second night. And we need less and less on the subsequent nights to

make a difference. So even Beis Shamai is adding every night. That is why when Moshiach comes we will light the Chanukah candles according to the opinion of Beis Shamai.

Why all eight the first night? Because in order to break the darkness, you need a tremendous amount of light. Once you break the darkness on the first night, you don't need so much light to continue. Breaking the darkness is the hardest thing, once you do, it's easier from there.

Doesn't Beis Hillel agree with this? It seems reasonable. Perhaps we can say that Beis Hillel is of the opinion, that even a little bit of light breaks and dispels the darkness. Once there is an opening, it's easy to add more and more light.

What can we learn from this?

There are times in a person's life when everything is dark, either for you or someone you know. What can you do to help yourself in this situation, which my wife calls, "The pit"?

This is what I learned from my wife Dina.

The pit is a useful place, because every time you are in the pit, you have to learn new coping skills in order to climb out. Sometimes it's going to be a small thing that is going to pull you out of your slump, like Beis Hillel, only a little bit of light breaks the darkness. And other times it's going to take something major to pull you out, like Beis Shamai, it takes a lot of light to break the darkness. Once you have a coping skill, it will remain with you and you will be able to tap into that when going gets tough.

So the next time you are in the cold and dark pit, you can be strong, take control and look at it as a growth opportunity to learn things that you would never learn if you weren't in the pit.

When you are in that pit take the time to process emotions in your life that are less than comfortable. Be compassionate to yourself. Life gets difficult and it doesn't do you much good to ignore the logical reactions to your situation. Once you give space to

¹ Talmud, Tractate Shabbos 21b.

² Numbers, 29:12-36.

³ AriZa"l.

the uncomfortable emotions and let them process, you make room for the joy again.

That's how you build character and depth of personality. And then you will be equipped to be there for another who is going through a rough patch, because you will truly understand.

May we all have a happy Chanukah and may Hashem send Moshiach and do away with the pit once and for all. May he come soon.