

Beith Shamai's Connection of Chanukah to Sukoth

The *Gemarah* in *Mesechtah Shabath* page 21 side 2 explains the different levels of performing the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah candles.

"The rabbis learned in a *beraitah*, that the mitzvah of Chanukah (baseline level) is one candle per household. The higher level is one candle for each one. The highest level is according to *Beith Shamai* – day one he lights eight, and from there on he decreases (lights one less) and moves forward, and *Beith Hillel* says on day one he lights one, from there on he adds (a candle per night) and he moves forward.

Ulah says, two *Amoraim* in the west (Eretz Israel is to the west of Bavel- where our *gemarah* was compiled)argue about their reasoning.

One says the reasoning for *Beith Shamai* (is that the candles) are *keneged*, the days that are coming. (meaning there are 8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 days left/coming) And the reasoning for *Beith Hillel* (is that the candles) are *Keneged* the days that are leaving (meaning day 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, are left). *Keneged* meaning Opposing, Representing, Paralleling/ and Symbolizing.

And one (amora) says the reasoning for *Beith Shamai* (is that the candles) are *Keneged* the Cow (sacrifices) that they would bring during the holiday of *Sukoth*. And the reasoning for *Beith Hillel* is that we go up in Holiness and we don't come down."

One reading this *gemarah* is struck by an obvious question, namely, what's the connection does Chanukah have with *Sukoth*.

To better understand the connection, we must go to the source, namely Parshath Pinchas *Sefer Bamidbar*, 29, 13 and on.

There we learn that on day one, we would sacrifice 13 cows, on day 2, 12 cows and so on, for a total of 70.

Rashi there explains that they were " *Keneged* the 70 nations of idol worshipers that are diminishing and going (ie, no more, Aztecs making human sacrifices, The Greco/Roman Pantheon, etc.). And in the time of the *Beith Hamikdash*, these sacrifices would protect them from suffering."

The 14 sheep that were brought every day were " *Keneged Isreal* which is called the 'scattered sheep' to eliminate from them the 98 curses that were mentioned in *Sefer Devarim* "(if they don't continue to serve HaShem properly).

With this insight from RASHI, the master teacher, we can start to understand the connection.

As we know, the *chachmim* teach us that unlike in the other *galuyoth*, where the conquerors sought to kill or subjugate us **physically**, the Syrian Greeks of the Chanukah story, sought to wipe us out **spiritually** by assimilating us into their physical, and material pleasure seeking religion. With *HaShem's* help, we were the victors in that war and ultimately their religion and culture faded from mankind.

To celebrate that victory over the Greeks properly, *Beith Shamai* holds that we need to signify their diminishment by diminishing the number of candles we have each day.

Beith Hillel on the other hand, holds that we need to emphasize the resilience of the Jews in the face of that more numerous and influential culture/religion. We sought to go up higher in *kedushah*, and not lower, so to parallel that we, light an additional candle on each night. Unfortunately, that hasn't always been easy to do, so *bedieved*, and in practice, we have, at least tried to stay in place, thus the constant number of sheep brought each day.

In practice, if you listen to what *Rashi* is saying, we need the *Beith Hamikdash* and *korbanoth* to effectively and completely do away with the idol worshiping, pleasure seeking, and materialistic religions still extant in the world.

And now we can understand how, even, the first set of explanations given for the differing opinions on how to light the candles parallels the second set.

According to the first reasoning given for *Beith Shamai*, that the decreasing number of candles, are *keneged* "the days that are coming", they symbolize the *Olam Habah* when we will once again have the *beith hamikdash* and *korbanoth*, and be able to do away with the idol worshiping, pleasure seeking, and materialistic religions still extant in the world .

And according to the first reason given for *Beith Hillel*, the increasing number of candles, are *keneged* the days that are leaving , ie the *Olam Hazei* , in which the Jews all have to do their share to increase our level of *Kedushah*, and our amount of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, in order to raise up this world to *Olam Habah*.

May we all be *zocheh* to complete our *Chelek*/share of the *Olam Habah*, easily and without need for more *Chevlei Hamashiach*/ birth pangs of *Mashiach*, that are intended to simply make us move on with our work! We love HaShem very much and shouldn't need any more reminders to finish our work!