

Rabbi Shlomo Farhi.com

SPREADING LIGHT AND
TORAH TO OUR AMAZING
BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN
AM YISRAEL



CHANNUKAH – THE DIMMER SWITCH

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Farhi

Geniuses Who Don't Know They're Geniuses

Some people are geniuses without even realizing it.

Not the kind of genius that writes books or wins prizes — but the kind that asks a simple, honest question that opens an entire world.

Someone once asked me:

“Why is Chanukah eight days? Is it because other holidays, like Sukkot, are eight days?”

At first, the question sounds almost funny. Holidays aren't competing with each other. Rosh Hashanah didn't lose in the first round of the playoffs and settle for two days. Every holiday has its own identity.

So the initial answer seems obvious: no, Chanukah is not eight days because Sukkot is eight days.

But then you stop.

And you realize.

Of course there *is* a connection.

Not because holidays copy one another — but because Torah is internally consistent. Themes echo. Ideas repeat. If you know where to look, nothing in Judaism stands alone.

The Three Levels of Chanukah Light

The Gemara in **Masechet Shabbat** teaches that there are **three levels** to lighting Chanukah candles.

The most basic obligation is simple: One candle per night, per household.

The next level — *mehadrin* — is to light one candle for **each member of the household** every night. If there are three people in the home, you light three candles every night, regardless of which night it is.

Then comes the highest level — *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* — lighting according to the night itself.

And here, the famous debate begins.

Beit Hillel says: start with one candle and add one each night.

Beit Shammai says: start with eight candles and reduce one each night.

Both opinions result in the **exact same total number of candles**. The disagreement is not mathematical. It is philosophical.

Ascending in Holiness — Or Facing Darkness

At first glance, Beit Hillel's position feels obvious.

Judaism teaches *ma'alin ba'kodesh* — we rise in holiness; we do not descend. You don't take something sacred and downgrade it. A Torah case can hold another Torah — but not jewelry. Holiness moves upward.

This principle appears everywhere in Jewish law. It feels universal. Intuitive.

So the question sharpens:

How could Beit Shammai argue otherwise?

The Sukkot Model — When the World Works

Beit Shammai anchors his view in **Sukkot**.

On Sukkot, the Jewish people bring **70 bulls** in the Beit HaMikdash — beginning with thirteen and reducing the number each day until we reach one.

Those seventy offerings correspond to the **seventy nations of the world**.

The Beit HaMikdash was never meant to be a private Jewish space. The Torah calls it “a *house of prayer for all nations*.” Am Yisrael was designed to be a conduit of blessing to the entire world.

Chazal say something extraordinary: if the nations truly understood how much blessing they received from the Beit HaMikdash, they would have surrounded it with soldiers to protect it.

This is the ideal world.

No jealousy.

No hatred.

No rivalry.

A world where Jewish light nourishes everyone.

Chanukah — When the World Doesn't

Chanukah represents a very different reality.

The Greeks were not bothered by Jews existing. They were bothered by Jews being **Jewish**.

“You can live here,” they said.

“Just don't practice Torah.

Don't insist on mitzvot.

Don't remain distinct.”

This is a unique form of darkness.

Because violence creates resistance — but comfort creates forgetting.

And when someone blows out another person's candle in a dark room, the darkness spreads everywhere.

Why Chanukah Is Not a Yom Tov

This explains something unusual.

Chanukah has a mitzvah — lighting candles — but it lacks the structure of a full Yom Tov. There is no obligation for a festive meal. Even Chanukah gatherings are not *seudot mitzvah* unless Torah is spoken.

Chanukah is not about celebration.

It is about **preservation**.

Thirty-Six Candles, Thirty-Six Hidden Tzaddikim

If you count the Chanukah candles — excluding the shamash — you arrive at **36**.

Chazal teach that in every generation there are **36 hidden tzaddikim** upon whom the world stands. They are not famous. They are not public. But without them, existence itself would collapse.

The Chanukah candles are not symbolic reminders.

They are **active channels** of hidden light.

The Menorah That Never Stopped Working

The Menorah in the Beit HaMikdash was not lit to provide light. The Beit HaMikdash didn't need illumination.

The Menorah brought **spiritual light** into the world.

And remarkably, it is the only vessel of the Beit HaMikdash whose function still exists today.

No Mizbeach.

No Aron.

No Shulchan.

Only the Menorah — now burning in Jewish homes across the world.

Or HaGanuz — The Hidden Light

At creation, God created a light so powerful that one could see from one end of the world to the other.

Humanity wasn't ready.

So God hid it — the **Or HaGanuz** — reserving it for the righteous.

That light didn't disappear. It was stored.

And it returns — on Chanukah.

But Or HaGanuz isn't only cosmic. It's personal.

When God Hides Something From Us

There were two radio hosts who once bought Bitcoin. Not much — just two coins. When it rose to about \$1,400, they were ready to sell.

Then they realized the password was lost.

No backup.
No customer service.
No way in.

They were furious. Years later, that same employee handed them a note. It was the password.

By then, Bitcoin was worth millions.

What felt like loss was protection.
What felt like stupidity was mercy.

God hid it because He wanted them to have it later.

That is Or HaGanuz.

When We Don't See the Red Flags

I once spoke to a man who went through a painful divorce.

"All the red flags were there," he said.
"I don't understand how I didn't see them."

He didn't ignore them — he truly didn't see them.

Later, his wife needed serious psychological help. The marriage couldn't continue. They divorced.

But from that marriage came two children.

When I asked him, "If you had seen everything clearly, would you give up those children?"

He didn't hesitate.

"No. I can't breathe without them."

Sometimes God hides clarity — not to trap us, but to give us something that could not exist otherwise.

The Oil Hidden in Plain Sight

The Greeks destroyed every jar of oil — except one.

Not by accident.

It sat there untouched among destruction.

The miracle of the first night was not that the oil burned longer than expected. The miracle was that it survived at all.

Sometimes God hides what is most essential in plain sight.

Chanukah Is a War for Judaism

Chanukah is not about food.
Not about culture.
Not about aesthetics.

It is about Jews fighting to remain Jews.

If the Greeks had won, Judaism would not have disappeared violently. It would have faded quietly.

The Maccabees refused to dim the flame.

Beit Shammai — The Dimmer Switch

Now Beit Shammai makes sense.

At first, darkness is overwhelming — you need eight candles.

But once darkness is confronted, removed, dismantled — fewer lights are needed.

This is not descent.

It is mastery.

Like a dimmer switch.

Two Ways to Illuminate

You can add light.
Or you can remove darkness.

Beit Hillel adds.
Beit Shammai confronts.

Both are Torah.

Shabbat Table Discussion Questions

1. Where are we adding light while avoiding darkness?
 2. When was something hidden from us that later revealed itself as a blessing?
 3. What does “fighting to be Jewish” look like quietly today?
 4. Where could one small flame change an entire home?
 5. Are we protecting the Menorah in our lives?
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The Takeaway

Chanukah isn't asking us to be louder Jews.
It's asking us to be **truer** Jews.

Every candle represents quiet, sustaining light.

Sometimes we add light.
Sometimes we remove darkness.
And sometimes, one flame is enough.

That is Chanukah.
That is the dimmer switch.
