

Beit Shammai/Beit Hillel Perspectives

- **Beit Shammai** believed that the most beautiful way to perform the *mitzvah* of lighting Hanukkah candles is to light eight candles on the first night and then decrease by one each night until lighting one on the eighth night. There are two reasons given for this order. The first is that it helps us count the number of days of Hanukkah yet to come. The second is that some sources indicate that the first Hanukkah was a delayed celebration of Sukkot since the Maccabees and their followers were hiding in caves when the holiday actually fell on the calendar. During the time of the Temple, sacrifices were offered on each day of Sukkot with a decreasing number each day (13 bulls on the first day, 12 bulls on the second day, etc.) Thus, the candles remind us of the sacrifices offered on Sukkot.
- **Beit Hillel** believed that the most beautiful way to perform the *mitzvah* of lighting Hanukkah candles is to light one candle on the first night and then increase by one each night until lighting eight on the eighth night. There are also two reasons given for this order. The first is that it helps us count the number of days that have already passed. The second is that Beit Hillel believed in the concept of *ma'alim be'kodesh ve'ein moridin*; one should increase in holiness and not decrease. (Another example of this concept is that one counts the days of the *Omer* from 1 – 49.)

