

Hanukkah - Talmud Shabbat 21b-22a

What do the words “תנו רבנן” mean?

“Our Rabbis taught”

What kind of a text do the words תנו רבנן introduce?

The text is from the time of the Mishna, but was not included in the Mishna by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. That text is a *b'raitā*/ברייתא.

What is the basic requirement for fulfilling the מצוה of lighting lights on Hanukkah?

There must be one light lit in each household for each night of Hanukkah.

On the first night: 1 light

On the second night: 1 light

On the third night: 1 light

On the fourth night: 1 light...etc.

How does one make the fulfillment of the מצוה of lighting lights on Hanukkah beautiful?

The household will light one light per person in the house each night.

If you have 2 parents and 3 kids in the family:

On the first night: 5 lights

On the second night: 5 lights

On the third night: 5 lights

On the fourth night: 5 lights...etc.

How does one make the fulfillment of the מצוה of lighting lights on Hanukkah even MORE beautiful?

There is an argument between Hillel and Shammai

Beit Shammai: start with 8 lights on the first night and decrease by one each night going forward

Beit Hillel: start with 1 light on the first night and increase by one each night going forward

What does the term הדור מצוה - *hiddur mitzvah* mean?

Hiddur Mitzvah - הדור מצוה is the Hebrew term that means “to beautify the performance of a commandment.” It is not only for the lighting of Hanukkah lights, but can be applied to many other commandments. Do what you can to make the fulfillment of any commandment more beautiful.

What was used for as the burning light on Hanukkah?

Clay lamps with oil and cotton/fabric wicks were used. That is why when we

refer to lights being lit on Hanukkah in the time of the Mishna, we DO NOT talk about candles.

Who was Ulla and what was the purpose of his opinion?

Ulla was an Amora, meaning that he was from the Talmudic period. When he read the b'raita, he wondered what the reasons were for Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai. He shared the opinion of two Babylonian Amoraim to explain WHY Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai said what they said.

Who was Rabbah bar Bar Hana and what was the purpose of his opinion?

Rabbah bar Bar Hana is an Amora from a later generation than Ulla and he comes to settle the discussion about the reasons for Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel.

What were the reasons for the opinions of Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel?

Beit Shammai: The lighting of the Hanukkah lights mirrors the system of sacrifices on Sukkot, which starts with the most and goes to the least.

Beit Hillel: מעלין בקדש ואין מורידין - in matters of holiness, we always increase, we do not reduce.

Tu Bish'vat/The Four Jewish New Years

Students will have to be able to fill in the blanks from this chart.

Date	New Year(s)
א' ניסן	New Year of Kings New Year of Pilgrimage Festivals
א' אלול [א' תשרי - רבי אלעזר, רבי שמעון]	New Year of the Livestock Tithe
א' תשרי	New Year of Years New Year of Sabbatical and Jubilee Years New Year of Planting and Vegetable Produce
א' שבט (שמאי) ט"ו בשבט (הלל)	New Year of the Trees

What is the New Year of the Kings for?

For historical and documentary purposes, the years of a king's reign were counted. However, the "anniversary" of a king's reign did not begin on the day he was crowned. There was a fixed date that was assigned to when the year of a king would change. So, no matter when a king was crowned, his first year could be as short as one day or as long as a full year.

What are the three "pilgrimage festivals?" Which one goes first? Why does the festival cycle begin this way?

1 - פסח

2 - שבועות

3 - סוכות

The festival cycle begins this way because the first Torah festival that is celebrated by the free nation of Israel is פסח. So, the Torah set up the festival calendar to begin with that holiday, the spring harvest festival.

What is a tithe and how does one do tithing?

A tithe is a religious tax. In the Jewish tradition, a tithe is a 10% tax on your property. In the case of livestock animals and fruit/vegetable produce, different tithes were required on any NEW growth since the previous tithing "New Year." For livestock, the year went from 1 Elul to 1 Elul. For produce, it was 1 Tishrei to 1 Tishrei.

What happens on א' תשרי that makes it the "New Year of Years?"

Just like the secular year increases when we switch to January 1st, 2010 --> 2011

On 1 Tishrei, we switch from 5770--> 5771 --> 5772...etc.

How is the basis for daily life and the Jewish calendar different now from what it was in the Mishna?

This is a thinking question where you need to discuss how we have gone from being a civilization based totally on the life of a farmer and the natural environment to the way the world/calendar works today...Think about it. There is also a blog post on the subject.