



STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Herschel Singer



As *Chanukah* approaches, my morning *shiur* decided to take a break from learning Talmud to take some time to delve into the deeper meaning and *halachot* of *Chanukah*. One of the main topics of discussion is the lighting of the candles. The basic *mitzvah* of lighting can be done for an entire household through just one person; the *ba'al habayit*, or head of the house. This seems to allude to the idea that the lighting of the candles is a *chovat beito*, rather than a *chovat ha-goof* (a *mitzvah* obligation on the house, rather than the individual).

But why? Wouldn't it make sense that everyone has to light his/her own candles? It's not like someone else can say the *bircat hamazon* for you, or put *teffilin* on for you... so why by *Chanukah* can one person light for everyone?

During the time of *Chanukah* (around 167 B.C.E) the Greeks were trying to oppress the Jewish people. The *Midrash* relates that one particular decree was to take away the Jews' privacy. They banned Jews from having the ability to lock their doors so that anyone could go into Jewish homes at any time.

The idea of having a private home life is an integral part of Judaism. The Greeks understood that, and felt that if they could destroy this ideal then they could destroy Judaism. But seeing as we are still around to learn these ideas, write them in emails, and share them with fellow Jews, we see that the Greeks failed. In order to never forget just how important the home life is to Jews, the *mitzvah* of lighting candles was made as a *chovat beito*, an obligation on the home. This way every year that we light the candles we have a chance to bond with our family, and celebrate all that we have to live for.

While this year many of us will not be with our families for *Chanukah*, it does not mean that we will not be at home. The fact that almost all of the students will be together in the Old City of Jerusalem to light our candles signifies that after 2000 years we have finally returned to our rightful home. To be here with

people that in these few months have become like family to us, is more than I could ask for. I hope that everyone has a meaningful *Chanukah* this year. When you light the candles take a few moments ... look at the candles ... and concentrate on all that you have. Being part of *Klal Yisroel* is an amazing gift that is not always easy to understand. But when you take those moments to introspect as you look at those candles, you`ll see that they don't only illuminate the room... but your whole perspective on life.

Good *shabbos* and happy *Chanukah*!