

SPARKS OF HOPE LEARNING
Tova Speter, www.thememproject.org

- Just like God declared let there be light, on Chanukah we say to the world, ‘Let there be light’.
- This historical event is a metaphor for each of us individually. In lighting the candles, we embark on a spiritual journey of illuminating our inner lives. As we look into the candles, we are challenged to look deep within our souls, and to find that inner clarity.
- For a Jew, this inner clarity must grow out of our collective historical, spiritual, and literary heritage - our Torah of life. Each soul put into this world is like a candle, a reflection of the light of the Torah (Proverbs 20:27 and 6:23).
- **20:27** The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inward parts.
- **6:23** For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light, & reproofs of instruction are the way of life.
- The Maccabean revolt came at the darkest moment of Jewish history--when not only was a foreign king imposing idolatry, but large members of Jews were choosing to obey.
- “It is You who lights my candle Adonai, my God, illuminates the darkness.” (Psalms 18:29)
- The light of Chanukah is symbolic of the inner spiritual strength of the Jewish people that despite all odds is never extinguished. *Rabbi Fred Klein*

- Hanukkah is the moment when light is born from darkness, hope from despair.
- The real conflict is between apathy and hope, between a blind surrendering to darkness and an acting to light up new pathways. Sometimes the arena will be in outward action, sometimes in inward meditation. But always the question is whether to recognize the darkness--and transcend it.

Rabbi Arthur Waskow

The Shamash: A Meditation for Lighting the Menorah

- In lighting our menorah, we use a special candle called the shamash. Technically, according to Jewish law, the light of the menorah is Holy, and represents the Divine presence. As such, we cannot use the candles to light other candles or to use the light for ‘mundane’ purposes. We therefore use a shamash candle to provide natural light and to light the others, thereby preserving the sanctity of the Chanukah lights.
- But there is a deeper meaning to all of this. We know that each soul is like a flame which is brought down into this world from God. (Proverbs 20:27) Each of us is a shamash. Each of us have the potential to light up the life of another human being. A simple smile, a kind word, and caring touch – all of these can make a difference.
- A flame that is distinguished cannot regenerate its own light. There are times in our life that we suffer. Maybe we are lonely or depressed or uninspired. We are like the extinguished candle. Things are dark and we feel alone. It is at these moments that we look to another to ignite us and to inspire us once again. When we light up the life of another, we help them to release their Divine light.
- There are eight nights to Chanukah, and each night we add a candle. In doing so, we bring more light into the world. In that same vain, each kindness we do for another person helps to heal them and make them whole once again.

<http://jewishmiami.org/about/departments/chaplaincy/Desktop/LiqhtingtheChanukahMenorah.pdf>

Two Meditations/Poems for Lighting Chanukah Candles

Light born from darkness,
dawn born from night,
hope born from quiet
waiting for the light.

Spring born from winter,
spark struck from sun,
strength born from calling
for the spring to come.

Tonight the dark is waiting,
longing to be gone.

Tonight the earth is turning,
facing toward the dawn.

*Rabbi Jill Hammer is the founder of Tel Shemesh
http://telshemesh.org/cheshvan/candlelighting_chant_for_chanukah.html*

As I light my candles tonight I ask you to bring hope into my heart tonight, and fill my soul with your healing. May the light of these candles bring to me strength and comfort.

As I light my candles tonight, remind me that there are so many people who are suffering around the world, people who live in dark places. Remind me of those who are afflicted by war, by disease, and by a world that chooses to remain blind.

As I light my candles, I ask You to make me like this shamash. Just as you heal, protect, and sustain me every day, sharing with me Your loving light, allow me to be a source of light to those around me.

As I light my candles tonight, I ask you to empower me to bring light to all those who need it, and to fill my life with opportunities to respond with justice and kindness.

As I light my candles tonight, I ask that you fill every creature with your loving and compassionate light, so each of us may turn towards each other in mutual love and understanding, and that we may all live together under Your Peaceful Wings.

Amen.

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