



CHANUKAH

LOUD AND LIT

Fighting Back against Fitting In

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Chanukah

Chanukah—the eight-day Festival of Lights that begins on the eve of the twenty-fifth day of the Jewish month of Kislev—celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, of purity over adulteration, and of spirituality over materialism.

More than twenty-one centuries ago, the Holy Land was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks), who sought to forcefully Hellenize the people of Israel. Against all odds, a small band of faithful Jews, the Maccabees, defeated one of the mightiest armies on earth, drove the Greeks from the Land, reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and rededicated it to the service of G-d.

When they sought to light the Temple's menorah (the seven-branched candelabrum), they found only a single cruse of olive oil that had escaped contamination by the Greeks. Miraculously, the one-day supply burned for eight days until new oil could be prepared under conditions of ritual purity.

To commemorate and publicize these miracles, the sages instituted the festival of Chanukah. At the heart of the festival is the nightly menorah (candelabrum) lighting: a single flame on the first night, two on the second evening, and so on till the eighth night of Chanukah, when all eight lights are kindled.

On Chanukah, we also add Hallel and *ve'al hanisim* in our daily prayers to offer praise and thanksgiving to G-d for "delivering the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, . . . the wicked into the hands of the righteous."

Chanukah customs include eating foods fried in oil—latkes (potato pancakes) and *sufganiyot* (doughnuts)—playing with the dreidel (a spinning top on which are inscribed the Hebrew letters *nun, gimel, hei, and shin*—an acronym for "*nes gadol hayah sham*—a great miracle happened there"), and the giving of Chanukah *gelt*—gifts of money—to children.



On Chanukah we light candles each night to commemorate the miracle of the *menorah* burning eight days from a single jar of oil.

TEXT 1A

*Maimonides,
Mishneh Torah, Laws
of Chanukah 3:1-2*

וּמִדְּלִיקוֹן בְּהֵן הַנֵּרוֹת בְּעָרֵב עַל פְּתָחֵי
הַבָּתִּים בְּכָל לַיְלָה וְלַיְלָה מִשְׁמוֹנַת הַלַּיְלוֹת
לְהַרְאוֹת וּלְגַלוֹת הַנִּס.

We light the candles in the evening at the doorways to our homes, each of the eight nights, to demonstrate and publicize the miracle.

TEXT 1B

Talmud, Shabbat 21b

מִצְוַתָּהּ מִשְׁתַּשְׁקַע הַחֲמָה עַד שֶׁתִּכְלֶה רֶגֶל מִן
הַשּׁוּק . . .

וְעַד כַּמָּה? אָמַר רַבֵּה בַר בַּר חֲנָה אָמַר רַבִּי
יוֹחָנָן: עַד דְּכַלְיָא רִיגְלָא דְתַרְמוּדָאִי.

The *mitzvah* [of kindling the Chanukah lights] is from sunset until the marketplace empties. . . .

And at what point do we consider the marketplace empty?
When the footsteps of the Tarmodites recede.

TEXT 2

*Maimonides,
Mishneh Torah, Laws
of Chanukah 4:1*

כַּמָּה נֵרוֹת הוּא מְדַלֵּיק בַּתְּנִיכָה?

נֵר לְכָל אֶחָד בַּלַּיְלָה הָרִאשׁוֹן, וּמוֹסִיף וְהוֹלֵךְ בְּכָל
לַיְלָה וְלַיְלָה נֵר אֶחָד.

How many candles should one light on Chanukah?

Each household member lights one candle [in their respective menorahs] on the first night. On each subsequent night, each household member lights an additional candle [in their respective menorahs].

CANDLES WE LIGHT



- Placed in the doorway or window for maximum visibility
- Lit after sunset, while people are still out on the street
- Each household member adds one candle each night.

CANDLES IN THE TEMPLE



- Kindled inside, not visible to the outside
- Lit before sunset
- Seven lamps kindled each evening, regardless of who was present

QUESTION

If Chanukah celebrates the Temple miracle, why doesn't our candle lighting mirror the way it was done in the Temple?

The Maccabees fought not just to protect Israel, but to preserve the purity and holiness of Judaism against Hellenistic influence.



TEXT 3

Megilat Antiochus

אֲנָטִיּוֹכְס מֶלֶךְ יִּנּוּ . . . שָׁם פָּנָיו לְעֵלוֹת
לִירוּשָׁלַיִם. וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר לְשָׂרָיו הֲלֹא יָדַעְתֶּם
כִּי יֵשׁ עִם הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם בְּיַמֵּינוּ.
לֹא לֵקִינוּ אִינָם מִקְרִיבִים וְדַתֵּינוּ אִינָם עוֹשִׂים
וְדַתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ עוֹזְבִים לַעֲשׂוֹת דָּתָם . . . עַתָּה
בּוֹאוּ וְנַעֲלֶה עֲלֵיהֶם וְנִבְטֵל מֵהֶם אֶת הַבְּרִית
אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת לָהֶם שַׁבַּת רֵאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ וּמִילָה.

בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה קָם אֲנָטִיּוֹכְס הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת
נִיקָנוֹר מְשֻׁנְהוּ בְּחֵיל גָּדוֹל וְעִם רַב וַיָּבֵא לְעִיר
יְהוּדָה לִירוּשָׁלַיִם. וַיַּהֲרוֹג בָּהּ הָרַג רַב וַיִּכֶן
בָּמָה בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹקֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲבָדָיו הַנְּבִיאִים שָׁם אֲשַׁכֵּן שְׁכִנְתִּי
לְעוֹלָם. בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא שָׁחֲטוּ אֶת הַחֲזִיר
וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת דָּמוֹ לְעִזְרַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ . . . וַיִּגְזֹר בָּהּ
גְּזֵרָה גְמוּרָה עַל שַׁבַּת רֵאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ וּמִילָה.

The Greek monarch Antiochus determined to march on Jerusalem. He said to his officers: "You are aware that the Jews of Jerusalem are in our midst. They neither offer sacrifices to our gods nor observe our laws; they abandon the king's laws to practice their own. . . . Come now, let us attack them and abolish the covenant made between them and G-d: Shabbat, *Rosh Chodesh*, and circumcision."

Immediately, King Antiochus dispatched his governor, Nicanor, with a large body of troops. He came to the Jewish city of Jerusalem and massacred many people; he set up a heathen altar in the Temple, concerning which the G d of Israel had said to his faithful prophets: "There will I establish My residence forever." In that very place, they slaughtered a swine and brought its blood into the holy court. . . . He proclaimed an absolute decree against Shabbat, *Rosh Chodesh*, and circumcision.



TEXT 3

Megilat Antiochus

בְּהִיּוֹת זֶה . . . אִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה בֶּן אַחֲרֵי מוֹת
בְּעֻלָּה וַתִּמָּל אוֹתוֹ לְשִׁמוּנָה יָמִים, וַתַּעַל עַל
חוֹמַת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם וּבְנָה מָהוּל בְּיָדָהּ. וַתַּעַן
וַתֹּאמֶר . . . אַתֶּם חוֹשְׁבִים לְבַטֵּל מֵאַתָּנוּ
הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת עִמָּנוּ בְּרִית אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לֹא
נִבְטֵל מִמָּנוּ שְׁבַת רֵאשִׁי חֹדֶשׁ וּמִיָּלָה מִבְּנֵי
בְּנֵינוּ לֹא יוֹסֵר. וַתִּפֹּל בְּנָה לְאַרְיָן וַתִּיפֹל
אַחֲרָיו וַיָּמוּתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם כְּאַחֶד, וְרַבִּים מִבְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עוֹ שֵׁים כֹּן בְּיָמֵם הָהֵם וְלֹא
נָשְׁנוּ בְּרִית אֲבוֹתָם.

So drastic was the king's edict that . . . a woman gave birth to a son after her husband's death and had him circumcised when he was eight days old. With the child in her arms, she went up on top of the wall of Jerusalem and cried out: "We say to you, wicked one: this covenant of our ancestors that you intend to destroy shall never cease from us, nor from our children's children." She cast her son down to the ground and flung herself after him so that they died together. Many Jews of that period did the same, refusing to renounce the covenant of their ancestors.



The Chanukah story represented a dual darkness: an external threat from the Greek military power and an internal threat from the Jewish Hellenists.

TEXT 4A

Siddur Tehillat
Hashem, *annotated*
ed. (New York: Merkos
L'inyonei Chinuch,
2006), p. 52

מְסַרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חֲלָשִׁים, וְרַבִּים בְּיַד
מְעֻטָּים, וְטֹמְאִים בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים, וְרָשָׁעִים
בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים, וְזֹדִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתְךָ.

You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the deliberate sinners into the hands of those who were invested in Torah study.

THE PRAYER

You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the deliberate sinners into the hands of those who were invested in Torah study.

→ GREEK ARMY

→ JEWISH HELLENISTS

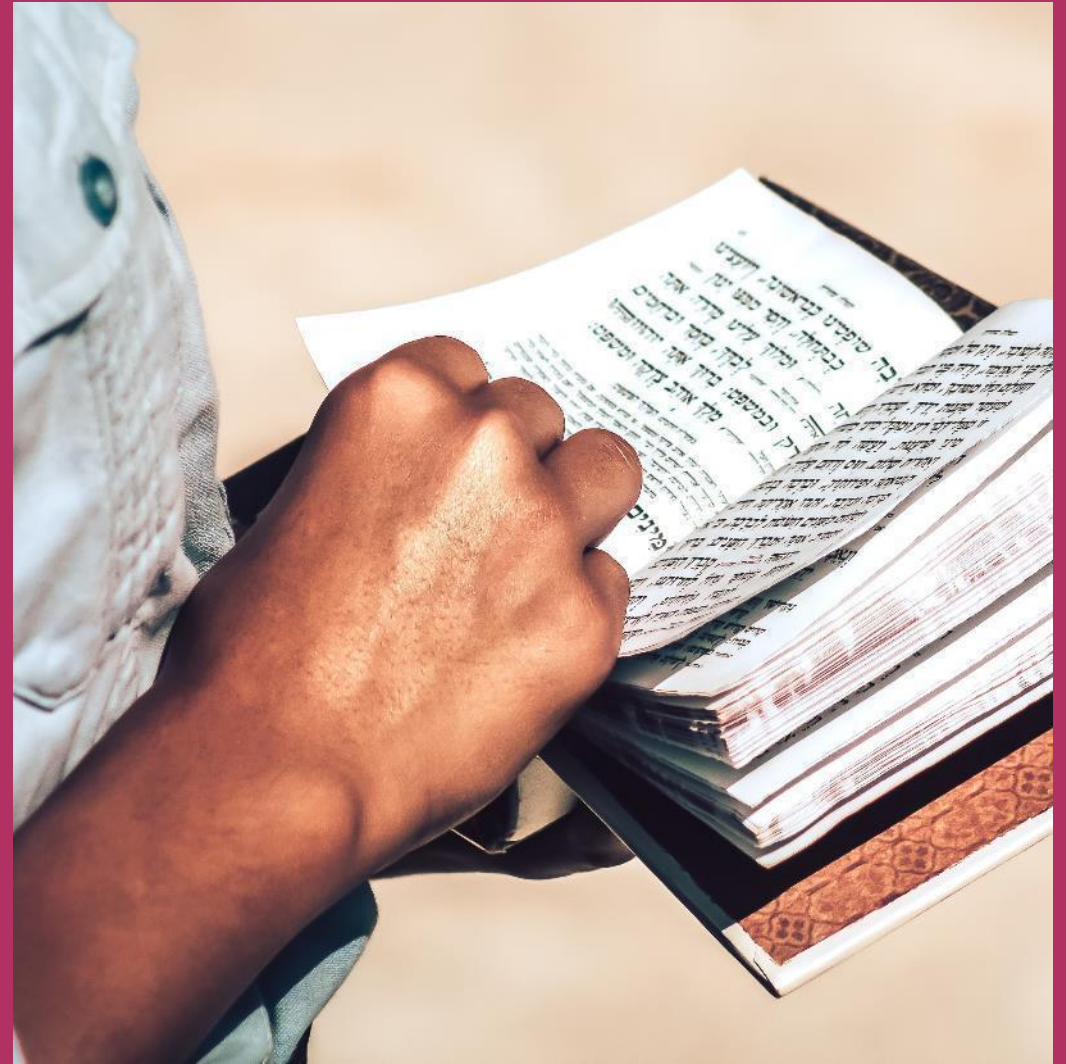
TEXT 4B

*Rabbi Eliyahu Spira,
Eliyahu Rabah, Orach
Chayim, 682*

נִרְאֶה לִי דְזוֹדִים כְּוּוֹנְתּוֹ עַל פְּרִיֲצֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשֶׁהָיָה בְּאוֹתוֹ הַזְּמַן.

It seems to me that the phrase “deliberate sinners” refers to the Jews of those days who broke with Jewish tradition.

We praise G-d equally
for delivering us from
both threats.



TEXT 5A

Song of Songs 6:10

מִי זֹאת הַנִּשְׁקָפָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁחַר, יָפָה
כַּלְבָּנָה, בָּרָה כַחֲמָה, אַיִמָּה פַּנְדְּגֵלוֹת.

Who is this who looks forth like the dawn,
fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome
as the bannered legions?

THE SUN: A PHYSICAL THREAT

The Greeks were as fearsome as the blazing sun, yet the Maccabees stood up to them and defeated them.



TEXT 5B

*Midrash, Shemot
Rabah 15:6*

בָּרָה כַּחֲמָה בְּמַלְכוּת יוֹן . . . בְּתַקוּפַת תְּמוּזָה מִי יוּכַל לְעִמֹּד כְּנֶגֶד
הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ? הַכֹּל בּוֹרְחִים מִמֶּנּוּ . . . כִּי בְּמַלְכוּת יוֹן הַכֹּל בָּרָחוּ מִמֶּנּוּ.
וּמִתְתִּיהָ הַכֹּהֵן וּבָנָיו עָמְדוּ בְּאַמוּנָתוֹ שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, וּבָרָחוּ
מִפְּנֵיהֶם הָאֲכֻלֹּסִין שֶׁל יוֹן, וְנִהְרְגוּ כֻלָּם.

“Clear as the sun”: clear as the Greek kingdom, which is compared to a summer sun . . . that no one can withstand. As everyone flees the sun [in the summer heat] . . . so did everyone flee the might of the Greek Kingdom.

Nevertheless, Mattathias the priest and his sons arose with faith in G-d, and the Greek multitudes were forced to flee from them. And they were killed.

THE SUN: A SPIRITUAL THREAT

The Greeks were compared to the sun because they stirred up the passions of the Jewish Hellenists, leading them to assimilate and abandon their faith.



TEXT 5C

*Rabbi Shalom Dovber
Schneersohn, Sefer
Hamaamarim 5654,
p. 98*

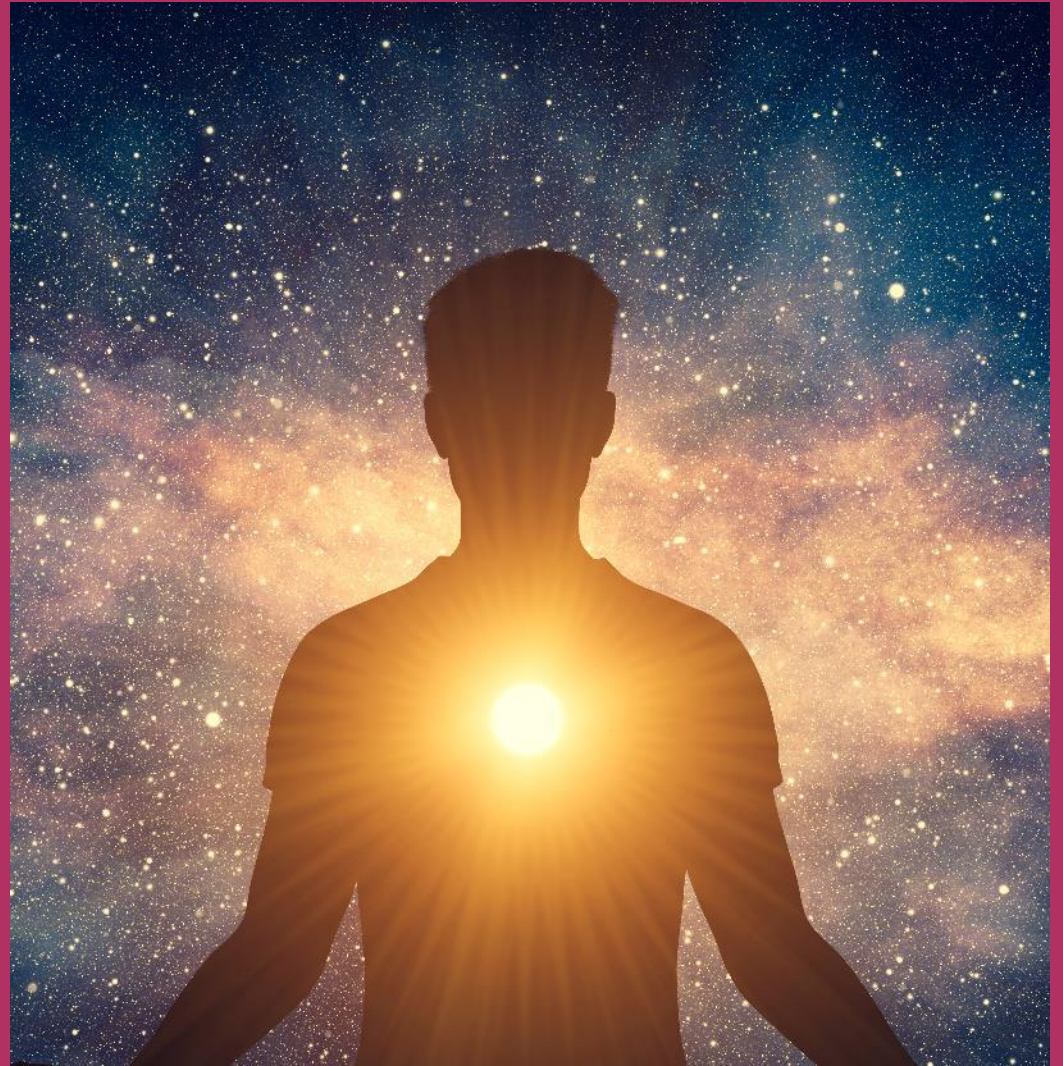
בְּרָה כַחֲמָה . . . פִּירוּשׁ חֲמָה הוּא בְּחִינַת
תְּמִימוֹת . . . שֶׁהוּא בְּחִינַת תְּמִימוֹת הַתְּאֵנָה
כו' שֶׁל הַיֵּצֶר הָרַע.

The sun represents the heat of temptation,
referring to the passions of our evil
inclinations.



The Maccabees fought with complete faith in G-d, leading Him to deliver them despite widespread sin.

Standing up for what's right creates a powerful light, both against external threats and internal challenges.



TEXT 6

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson,
Sefer Hamaamarim
Melukat (Torat
Menachem edition) 2, p.
169*

הַגְּלוּת שֶׁנִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם חוֹשֶׁךְ. וְהַסִּיכָה לְחוֹשֶׁךְ הַגְּלוּת הִיא
הַחוֹשֶׁךְ הָרוֹחֵנִי, עֵינַי הַחֲטָאִים, שֶׁהֵם הַיִּפְךָ נֵר מְצֻוֶה וְתוֹרָה
אוֹר. כְּמוֹ שְׂאוּמְרִים וּמִפְּנֵי חֲטָאֵינוּ גָּלִינוּ . . .
עֵינַי נֵר חֲנוּכָה הוּא לְהָאִיר אֶת חוֹשֶׁךְ הַגְּלוּת.

Our sins extinguish the spiritual light of Torah and *mitzvot*. This lands us in exile, a place of spiritual darkness. As we say in the prayers, "Because of our sins, we were exiled from our Land. . . ."

The objective of the Chanukah lights is to illuminate the darkness of exile.

ANSWER

The candles don't just commemorate the Temple miracle—they also celebrate the spiritual victory, empowering us against darkness. This explains why we light them the way we do.



Throughout history, Jews have faced pressures to assimilate and abandon their Judaism in public.

TEXT 7

*Yehudah Leib
Gordon, "Hakarmel,"
18 April, 1866*

אַרְצֵי עֵדֶן זֹאת הִנֵּה לְךָ תִּפְתָּח,
בְּנֵיךָ "אֲחֵינוּ" לְךָ יִקְרְאוּ עִתָּה.
עַד מָתַי תִּהְיֶה קִרְבָּם כְּאֹרֶחַ,
לָמָּה מִנְּגִד לָהֶם תִּלְךְ אִתָּה?

וּכְבֶּר גַּם יִסִּירוּ שְׂכָמְךָ מִסְּבִל,
וַיִּמְעַל צְוֹאֲרֶךָ עֲלֶיךָ יְרִימוּ,
יִמְחוּ מִלְּבָבָם שִׂנְאָת שׂוֹא וְהֶבֶל,
יִתְנוּ לְךָ יָדָם, לְךָ שְׁלוֹם יִשְׁימוּ. . .

אֶל אוֹצֵר הַמְּדִינָה הֵבֵא חֵילֶךָ
וּבִנְכֹסֶיךָ קַח חֶלֶק וְנִזְבֵּד.
הִיְהִי אָדָם בְּצִאֲתֶךָ וַיְהוּדִי בְּאֶהְלֶךָ,
אֶחָ לְבִנֵי אֶרֶץְךָ וְלַמְּלִכָּה עֶבֶד.

הֲקִיץ עַמִּי, עַד מָתַי תִּישָׁנָה?
הֵן גִּזַּז הַלַּיִל, הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ הֵאִירָה;
הֲקִיץ, שָׂא עֵינֶיךָ אֲנָה וְאֲנָה
וְזַמְנֶךָ וּמְקוֹמֶךָ אֲנָה הַכִּירָה.

This land of Eden is now open to you.
Its sons now call you "brothers."
How long will you dwell among them as a guest?
Why would you march in opposition?

They have lifted the burden from your shoulders,
The yoke was removed from around your neck.
From their hearts, they erased hatred and folly.
Their hands extend to you in peace. . . .

To the treasury of the state, deliver your treasure,
And bear your share of its bounty and wealth.
Be a gentleman in the streets and a Jew at home,
A brother to your countryman and a servant to your king.

Awaken my people, how long shall you sleep?
The night was cut short; the sun shone through.
Awaken, and peer this way and that.
Behold, this is your time and place.

When we assimilate in our actions, our hearts follow.



TEXT 8

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 1, p. 91*

אין אזא צייט איז ווייניק אז מען זאל מאכן ליכטיק ביי זיך אין שטוב, ווארום אויפן גאס איז פינסטער, און די פינסטערניש פון גאס קען דורכשפארן אויך אין שטוב, דארף מען לייגן השתדלות אויף באלייכטן די גאס, מען צינדט חנוכה-ליכט ווען ס'איז פינסטער און לעבן טיר דוקא, בכדי צו באלייכטן די גאס.

עס איז ווייניק וואס ער וועט צינדן ליכט ביי זיך אויפן טיש וואו ער עסט אדער אויפן שרייב-טיש און עפענען די טיר כדי אז די ליכט זאל לייכטן אויך אין גאס, נאר מען דארף צינדן די ליכט לעבן טיר, מען דארף לייגען השתדלות אויף באלייכטן די גאס.

At such times, it is insufficient to illuminate the home because the street's darkness can break through into the house. Instead, work to illuminate the street by deliberately kindling the Chanukah lights near the window or door.

It is not enough to light them at the dining table or work desk and allow the light to spill out through an open door. No, light them at the door. Bring your light to the street.



NEAR WINDOW

We light the candles where they can be seen to remind us to share our light publicly and not keep our Judaism hidden.

TEXT 9

Rabbi Shalom
Dovber Schneersohn,
Sefer Hamaamarim
5654, p. 98

וזהו שמצות נר חנוכה הוא משתשקע החמה, היינו כאשר נשקע חום
היצר הרע.

עד דכליא ריגלא דתרמודאי, מלשון מורדת . . .
ובזמן שקיעת החמה מדליקין הנרות להאיר את החשך.

The *mitzvah* to kindle the Chanukah lights begins after the sun sets [and the heat dissipates]. The symbolic meaning is that these candles empower us to cool the passions of our evil inclination.

We light the candles until the Tarmodites vacate the marketplace. The Hebrew letters that comprise *tarmod* also comprise *moredet*—one who turns against G-d . . . [meaning the candles help us counter the temptation for assimilation]. . . .

[In other words] we light the candles at night to illuminate our darkness.

AT NIGHT

We light the candles at night to celebrate the Maccabees' spiritual light and inspire us to overcome darkness and assimilation today.



TEXT 10

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 1, p. 91*

אויך איז ווייניק די צאל ליכט פון די פריערדיקע נעכט ווארום מען קען זיך
ניט באנוגענען מיט דעם וואס מ'איז ניט געווארן נידעריקער און מען שטייט
אויפן זעלבן מצב פון נעכטן, נאר מען דארף גיין אלץ העכער און העכער . . .
מען קוקט אויף אים מיט א קרומער אויג דארף ער ניט נתפעל ווערן און טאן
מיט מסירת נפש, אויסצופירן די שליחות וואס דער אויבערשטער האט אים
געשיקט.

It is never enough not to fall back; we must always move forward. This is why we can't be satisfied with kindling the same number of lights as the previous night. . . .

If someone looks askance at a Jew, we can't let it bother us. We must be tenacious and continue onward with the mission with which G-d entrusted us.



INCREASING CANDLES

We add candles each night to show that our response to assimilation is to grow stronger and shine brighter.

We are G-d's ambassadors
in this world, tasked with
preserving our identity and
sharing it with others.



TEXT 11

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, "On Not Being Afraid of Greatness," rabbisacks.org

Rabbi Norman Lamm tells the amusing story of Mendel the waiter. When the news came through to a cruise liner about the daring Israeli raid on Entebbe in 1976, the passengers wanted to pay tribute, in some way, to Israel and the Jewish people. A search was undertaken to see if there were any Jewish members on board the ship. Only one Jew could be found: Mendel the waiter. So, at a solemn ceremony, the captain of the cruise liner, on behalf of all the passengers, offered his deep congratulations to Mendel, who suddenly found himself elected *de facto* as the ambassador of the Jewish people. We are all, like it or not, ambassadors of the Jewish people. . . .

G-d trusted us enough to make us His ambassadors to an often faithless, brutal world. The choice is ours. Will our lives be a *kidush Hashem* [bring glory to G-d], or, G-d forbid, the opposite?



Chanukah candles empower us against spiritual darkness. We light them to show that the way we respond to darkness is by growing stronger and shining brighter.

KEY POINTS

1. We light Chanukah candles to commemorate the miracle of lighting candles in the Temple for eight nights with a jar of oil that was only meant to last for one night.
2. On a deeper level, the Chanukah lights represent the Maccabees' unbending determination and unflinching faith. Kindling them empowers us to take on and overcome our challenges.
3. We light the Chanukah candles after dark and near a window or door to demonstrate that we don't cower from the dark. Instead, we illuminate it.
4. We increase a candle each day to demonstrate that falling back or standing still is not an option. The only way to survive is to grow progressively more potent and filled with light.
5. Immigrants are expected to blend into their adopted country's culture and environment. Ambassadors are meant to remain true to their home culture. We are G-d's ambassadors.

