



# HANUKKAH

Hanukkah is the festival of lights, a festivity that fills us with hope and joy. It's a festivity that fills us with warmth and optimism. During this Jag, we must light a new candle in our hanukia, adding every day a new lighted candle to those we had lighted the earlier day. As well as playing with the "sevivon", eating meals with oil ("sufganiot"), and exchanging gifts, on this holiday we relate to the ideals of freedom and independence that drove the Maccabeus to fight for the sovereignty of Israel and the continuity of the message of the Torah.

In order to explain one of the meanings of this holiday, allow me to share with you a beautiful Hasidic story that says that two men were lost in the woods in Eastern Europe. It was a dark and cold night, they were alone, without help, or resources, without any hope of finding the way back to the shtetl.

These two Hasidim prayed in the same synagogue and were known as "the jajam" (the wise) and "the shote" (the naïf).

All of a sudden, they heard from a distance what sounded like a coach. Eventually, it went past the two men.

The naïf man was very excited, and started telling his companion: "Did you see that? Did you see the luxury? Did you see those magnificent clothing that the men inside were wearing? Isn't it amazing?"

To which the jajam responded: "No, I didn't see it, I didn't even see the people inside, much less their clothing; I was watching the coach's light that was showing us the road.

Even though I enjoy Hanukkah immensely, every year, as we get closer to the festivity, an odd feeling consumes me, and sometimes I feel uncomfortable and annoyed at the economic, commercial and consumerist exploitation of the Jag.

Sometimes I feel as if most of us have forgotten the meaning and the essence of Hanukkah.

It is because of this that I would like us to go back to the beginning and take advantage of this opportunity, to see the coach's light so It can show us the way and we can rediscover what gave origin to Hanukkah: The Miracle.

The Talmud tells us in Masejet Shabat about a Divine Miracle: when the Greeks went to the Temple of Jerusalem (on the II century before the Common Era), they profaned all the oil that was stocked there. When the Maccabeus returned, they only found one vase with oil, with the seal "Cohen Hamikdash", which was only enough oil to give light for one day. To everyone's surprise, a miracle took place and the oil lasted eight days, which was the time needed to produce more.

We also have a human Miracle, represented by the rebellion of the Maccabeus: the miracle

of the triumph of the minority over the majority; the weak over the powerful; the miracle of the revolt over the oppression; the right people have to survive, to have integrity and autodetermination.

In the bracha (blessing) that we pronounce when we light the candles, we pray: "she asá nisim laavoteinu bayamim haem bazman hazé", "that G'd made miracles in those times and also in our era."

We can ask ourselves: Who among us experimented a miracle in his life? What can we do to make the miraculous experience not just a part of the past, but something that is constantly renewing itself?

In order to answer these questions I would like to start with an episode that happened a few days ago when a good friend of mine asked me what I wanted him to give me for this Hanukkah.

After a few seconds of thought, I told him that what I needed was a new pair of glasses, firstly because my sight gets worse every day and also because I would like a pair of glasses that would allow me to see the presence of the Creator in every person and everything.

On this Hanukkah we must put on a new pair of glasses that gives us the possibility to be able to look as if we were children again, in awe of the many gifts and wonders we are blessed with everyday. We need new glasses to be sensitive to the reality that "La'A'nay Haaretz Umloá", that "G'd is the Earth and everything it contains", and that His presence can be found in everything and in every moment.

Hanukkah, with its light, invites us to wake up and remain with opened eyes to see all the wonders and mysteries that surround us. We experience "little miracles" everyday: to wake up every morning, the health of our body, the beauty of the mitzvoth, the gaze of a loved one, the taste of a meal, the smell of a flower, the crying and laughter of a child, the immensity of a mountain, the vastness of the sea, the beauty of nature.

It's not necessary to see the exit of Egypt, the crossing of the sea, or the delivering of the Torah in Mount Sinai, or to leave this world to experience miracles...

Hanukkah invites us to see in every day, every hour, every instant of life, a wonderful miracle.

May G'd allow us to recover our capacity to be amazed, and that we never stop being surprised with the small and big miracles of Creation every day.

Chag Haurim Sameach !

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