

Menorah Meditations

1st Night- Gratitude for small miracles gives birth to even bigger miracles

On the first night of Chanukah, the *Beit Hamikdash* (the Temple) was rededicated after the Maccabees defeated the Greeks and liberated Jerusalem. They lit the one jar of oil not knowing what the future would bring, but thankful for the miracles that had just occurred and hopeful for what was to come. Judaism teaches that gratitude is not just a nice thing, rather it is the vehicle through which more blessing flows. This one jar of oil burned for eight nights.

Meditation:

What do I have to be thankful for in my life? Do I take those aspects of my life for granted or do I realize all of the “small” miracles that occurred to make those things happen? Take a moment to be grateful for everything wonderful in your life.

2nd night- The darkest times in our life are there to help us discover our inner spark.

Chanukah comes during the darkest time of the year. During this time we light a candle to bring light into this dark time. After this the days start getting longer. Judaism teaches that we all go through “days of light” and “days of darkness”. It is during the dark days that we can often discover how great we actually are.

Meditation:

How have the challenges and difficult times in my life contributed to building me as a person? What inner light did I discover about myself during these dark times? Take a moment to be grateful, not just for the good, but for the difficult as well.

3rd Night- Your inner flame is ready to dance.

There is a proverb (20:27) the “the candle of God is the soul of man”. Indeed, we see that the word *NeFeSH* (soul) is an acronym for *ner* (flame), *psil* (wick) and *shemen* (oil). The wick corresponds to our physical body that keeps us grounded. The flame corresponds to our soul that is dancing and yearning to go higher. The oil corresponds to the spiritual activities that we do on this world that feed our soul.

Meditation:

What is the “oil” in my life that feeds my spiritual fire? How full of life do I feel when I am doing that activity? Does it feel like my soul is dancing? Do you put aside enough time in your busy life to feed your soul? Take a moment to try to recreate that feeling when you experience that inner excitement.

4th Night- Me. The individual.

The miracle specifically revolves around oil. Oil was something that was used in many of the spiritual ceremonies in the Temple. This is because of the unique characteristic of oil that it mixes in with other liquids and then separates. This represents the balance of how we should approach the world. Integrating and being part of a community, but also have our unique identity.

Meditation:

Is my main motivation in life to fit in with everybody else and to be part of the “club”? Or do I value my own individuality? Take a moment to focus on the unique gifts, talents and strengths that you have that you can use to accomplish your unique mission in the world.

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5th Night- Slow down and don't forget to breath

Each vessel in the Temple represented a vital organ in the body. The pure-oil-burning seven-branched *Menorah* corresponded to the pure-air-breathing seven-lobed lung. Life often gets crazy and the stress and anxiety of the daily grind causes us to forget to slow down, breath and reflect on the things that really matter.

Meditation:

Do I spend most of my time completely caught up in the hustle of the daily grind or do I give myself enough time to self-reflect and focus on the things that really matter? Am I constantly seeking the company of others at the expense of getting to know myself by spending time just with myself? Take a long deep breath and experience the pleasure of just being present in the moment.

6th Night- Share your secret.

Chanukah occurs on the 25th of Kislev. The 25th word of the Torah is *ohr* (light), referring to the creation of light on the first day. But the commentaries say that this wasn't a physical light. It was a hidden spiritual light set aside for the righteous. Indeed the numerical value of the word *ohr* is the same as the Hebrew word *raz* which means secret. When we light the Chanukah candles at our windows, we are symbolizing sharing this secret spiritual light with the world!

Meditation:

What "secrets" have I discovered about my Jewishness? What impressions and misconceptions was I holding on to until I discovered something deeper? Am I doing enough to share my secret with the people that I love?

7th Night- Elevate Everything

The Greeks and Jews had opposing views how to view the physical world. The Greeks produced beautiful art and architecture and loved philosophy, drama and history. The Jews also believed in beauty but believed that everything can be used to come closer to God. The Greeks believed in beauty for beauty's sake alone. Alluding to this, the Hebrew name for the Greeks are Yavan, while the Jewish people are compared to a Yonah (dove). The word Yonah is the letters of Yavan plus the letter Heh, an allusion to God.

Meditation:

Do I use the beautiful things in this world for the sake of beauty alone or have I discovered its higher purpose? What gives me physical please in this world? How can I use those physical pleasures of life to grow close spiritually and not just for my own physical pleasure?

8th Night- Transcend your limits.

The number 8 has significant meaning in Kabbalah. The number 7 represents the completion of nature. The number 8 represents the transcendence. We all have the ability to transcend our natural limits and do amazing things. Our biggest problem is that we limit ourselves based on our weaknesses. Chanukah teaches us to believe in the power of transcendence.

Meditation:

What are the things in life that are holding me back from my ideal? Are they specific fears? Are negative beliefs? Am I willing to revisit those dreams and give them another chance? Am I ready to use this Chanukah as the beginning of a breakthrough in my life?