

What's With All Those Hanukkah Lights?

If you were asked, "What is one of the most important tasks you can attain during your lifetime, what would it be?

Perhaps it is to be the best parent or to do a good a job at work or school. Or maybe it is to be a good friend, to travel and see the world, to succeed at a sport or master a musical instrument. There are so many answers to what we can achieve during our lifetime.

There is a fable which states that a person's task in their lifetime is to be a "Lamp-Lighter." What is this?

Before electricity, there was a person in every town who would light the gas street lamps with a flame carried on the end of a long pole. There had to be someone even in faraway desolate places to light those lamps, providing needed light for others.

Lighting the candles for Hanukkah is like being a lamplighter.

Sometimes we are ready and excited to celebrate the Mitzvah of lighting the Menorah. Yet other times we are tired or apathetic. It is cold, we came home late, dinner is not ready, and we forget to light the candles. The street could stay dark and forsaken for all we care.

It is especially at these moments that we must be a lamplighter!

The flame of a candle is not only a fire that burns and goes out. It can be much more! When we gaze at the candle, we can feel calm and comforted. Sitting still a few moments with our thoughts can bring a sense of happiness and peace.

Hanukkah lights are "spiritual" in an interesting way. We observe that when you use something physical, it is diminished. The more money you spend, the less you have; the more gasoline you use, the emptier your tank, etc.

In contrast, spiritual things like the flame of a candle, increase with use.

If we share love with another, we become more loving, not less. When we light a candle, we can light hundreds of others and the original candle always remains as bright as ever. The more goodness we practice, we become more compassionate and caring.

Lighting the Hanukkah candles reminds us to be lamplighters - sharing the intangible gifts of light and laughter, love and forgiveness, consensus and peace.

May we all be blessed with a meaningful and light-filled winter holiday season, and may peace find its way into our troubled world as we say, Amen.