

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT: MITZVOT, FAITH, AND THE PATH TO REDEMPTION

In moments of profound darkness, a flicker of light can bring hope and redemption. At the beginning of Sefer Shemot, one of the darkest times in Jewish history, the Torah recounts (Shemot 2:2), “*And the woman conceived and bore a son, and she saw that he was good.*” The Midrash (in *Sotah* 12a) elaborates that when Moshe was born, during the tumultuous times of Pharaoh’s decree, Yocheved’s home filled with light, symbolizing that redemption was near. This spiritual illumination mirrors the light of the Chanukah

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menorah, reminding us that even in times of uncertainty, the seeds of salvation are being sown.

During Chanukah, we commemorate a time when Jews were forced to hide their observance under the oppressive rule of Antiochus IV. In secret, they continued to light Shabbos candles, learn Torah, and live lives of faith, despite the dangers they faced. Their perseverance led to the miraculous victory of the Maccabees and the rededication of the Beit HaMikdash. The miracle of the oil, which burned for eight days, symbolizes how even a small light can triumph over overwhelming darkness.

While the Jews in the times of the Maccabees hid their *mitzvot* and the light of their Torah learning, the *mitzvah* of lighting the Chanukah menorah today emphasizes *pirsumei nisa*—publicizing the miracle (*Shabbat* 21b), as opposed to keeping it secret. The Rambam (*Hilchot Chanukah* 4:12) explains that the light of the



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menorah is precious because it reveals that Hashem’s presence endures, even when concealed. Each candle we place in windows and doorways sends a message: the Jewish spirit cannot be hidden or extinguished, and even the smallest light has the power to illuminate the darkest night.

This theme of hidden faith bringing forth redemption has been repeated throughout Jewish history. During the Holocaust, Jews kept *mitzvot* in secret—lighting candles, observing Shabbat, and studying Torah—even

when doing so meant risking their lives. In concentration camps and ghettos, these hidden acts became powerful symbols of spiritual resistance, much like the secret *mitzvot* observed during the time of the Maccabees. Their hidden light kept the flame of Judaism alive, paving the way for survival and hope.

On October 7, Jews once again found themselves facing unimaginable fear. Families took shelter in safe rooms, whispering *Shema Yisrael* in the dark, praying for safety. These moments of concealed faith echoed the experiences of Jews throughout history—from the Chanukah era to the Holocaust—where faith endured even when it could not be expressed openly.

In the wake of this most recent tragedy, a remarkable transformation has taken place. Many Jews who had been disconnected from religious observance have taken on small *mitzvot*—lighting Shabbat candles, putting on tefillin,

or saying *Shema*—as expressions of connection and solidarity. Like the flames of a menorah that can ignite countless others without diminishing, these individual sparks of faith inspire others and bring us closer to redemption. When we perform *mitzvot*, we draw this hidden light into the world, creating ripples of holiness that bring us closer to the final redemption. As we light the menorah this Chanukah, we reflect on the hidden miracles that have sustained us throughout history, from the days of the Maccabees to the Holocaust and the events of October 7. Each flame is not only a personal declaration of faith but also an invitation to others to connect with their Jewish identity, reminding us that Hashem's light continues to shine, guiding us toward *geulah*. Through every mitzvah and each flame we kindle, we add to this light, inspiring others and bringing ourselves closer to the ultimate redemption, when Hashem's light will

illuminate the entire world.

To further spread the light this Chanukah, let us all take small, meaningful steps in our daily lives. Lighting Shabbat or Chanukah candles with the intention of bringing greater peace into our homes creates a sacred space for light to flourish. Acts of kindness—whether through reaching out to someone in need, offering emotional support, or giving *tzedakah*—help illuminate the world around us. Sharing Torah, even a single idea, has the power to spark inspiration in others. Finally, taking on a new mitzvah, no matter how small, strengthens our connection to Hashem and contributes to the collective holiness of the Jewish people. Through these actions, we ignite new flames, inspiring others to do the same. Together, these sparks will light the way toward the final *geulah*, when the light of redemption will shine for all.

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