

JOURNAL JOTS FOR KISLEV



“The soul of man is the lamp of G-d.” Proverbs 20:27

OHR KADOSH

Holy Light

“The soul of man is the lamp of G-d,” the Book of Proverbs tell us (20:27). What this means is that ultimately, our task is not to light candles, but to *be* candles. We have the potential to be the bits of light that help bring G-d back into a world gone dark. As the *Sefas Emes* puts it in discussing Hanukkah, “A human being is created to light up this world.” (Hanukkah, 1874)¹

Each of the follow ‘Journal Jots’ is from Rabbi Arvaham ArieH Trugman’s book, *The Lights of Chanukah*.² As we enter this season of Light, may we take time to sit with the One who is Light and “Let the finite physical lights of Chanukah be a gateway to the infinite spiritual light of G-d.”³

KISLEV- 1

When we speak of experiencing the light of G-d or of being spiritually enlightened, we are not talking about seeing a physical light with our eyes, but rather about experiencing an... awareness...where the soul is aroused and experiences G-d through intellectual illumination, or a feeling of warmth and closeness. Light, through its physical traits and powerful symbolism, simultaneously bridges the physical and spiritual worlds, paradoxically revealing itself, while at the same time concealing an even more profound essence.

KISLEV - 2

Light, from the moment of its inception, is compared to darkness and is almost immediately separated from it.⁴ In being compared to darkness, light seems to shine. Thus, King Solomon and the Sages note that, “More advantageous is the light that comes from darkness.”⁵

KISLEV- 3

Even a small amount of light dispels much darkness in your immediate environment as well as within the deepest recesses of your own inner world.

KISLEV - 4

¹ Rabbi Shai Held

² Ohr Chadash, <https://thetrugmans.com>

³ Rabbi Avraham ArieH Trugman, *The Lights of Chanukah*, 22

⁴ Genesis 1:3-5

⁵ *Ecclesiastes* 2:13; *Zohar* 3:47b

The Tabernacle and the Temple represent the indwelling of an infinite G-d in a finite world. The light of the menorah...symbolizes the infinite light of G-d shining within our finite material world. The infinite light of G-d is clothed in physical light.⁶

KISLEV - 5

We can turn a more passive focus on the Chanukah lights into an active and potent prayer: "Please G-d! - let Your infinite light shine into every nook and cranny of this world as well as deeply within my soul to dispel the darkness of ignorance, hatred, and fear. Let there be light!"

KISLEV - 6

Chanukah is celebrated on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev. The twenty-fifth word in the Torah is *ohr*, "Light": "And G-d said let there be *light*..." (Genesis 1:3). The twelfth word in the Torah is darkness: "And the earth was astonishingly empty with *darkness* on the face of the deep..." (Genesis 1:2). We see from this textual juxtaposition that darkness precede light.

KISLEV - 7

Light is associated with G-d, particularly with His countenance or "face," which shines with a Heavenly radiance.⁷...Although the light of G-d is present everywhere and at all times, sitting by the Chanukah lights and basking in their glow is among the most auspicious moments of the entire year for...basking in G-d's countenance and light.

KISLEV - 8

The symbolism of the one cruse of undefiled oil found by the Maccabees represents the pure and undefiled spark of holiness embedded deep inside each and every [one of us]. No matter how far away or distant [we may be from G-d]...this seemingly insignificant drop of pure, holy oil waits patiently, ready to be ignited at any time.

KISLEV - 9

Israel is compared to the olive tree, 'a fresh olive, beautiful with handsome fruit' (Jeremiah 11:16), and the Holy One to a lamp, 'The lamp of G-d' (Proverbs 20:27). Oil is placed in a lamp and together they give light. So too does the Holy One say to Israel - 'Because My

⁶ Reflect on 1 Corinthians 3:16

⁷ Number 6:25-26

light is Your light and your light is My light, you and I, together, will light the light of Zion, as it says (Isaiah 60:1): 'Arise! Shine! For your light has come.' (*Yalkut Shimoni*, Isaiah 499)⁸

KISLEV- 10

The possibility of rebirth and renewal is encoded into the very fabric of time itself...As one gazes at the Chanukah lights, consider the essential message of Chanukah - that even when you're down you're not out, and that miracles CAN happen even when you least expect it.

KISLEV - 11

By lighting the Chanukah lights during the darkest time of the year, and especially by adding more light each night, we are playing our part in bringing more light to the world. This symbolizes the ongoing task of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, and being G-d's partner in creation.

KISLEV - 12

Let the lights of Chanukah penetrate any and all "dark" places in your mind, heart and soul, bringing a gentle light to heal old wounds and scars.

KISLEV - 13

Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach taught that there is the light of the sun, the light of the moon, and the light of the candle. Most of the world measures time by the sun, unchanging and always full: while we Jews measure time by the moon, which is constantly in flux, waxing and waning. Yet, a candle represents something altogether different: eternity, which includes and transcends all dichotomous concepts of time and space. (*The Soul of Chanukah*; edited by Rabbi Shlomo Katz).

KISLEV - 14

The Chanukah lights activates a place in the soul which rises above the natural order of time and space, allowing us to feel the infinite light of G-d and the soul's ultimate source in the Divine.

KISLEV - 15

By having the *holy chutzpah* to light our tiny lights in the midst of such all-encompassing darkness and to place them in the window for all to see, we are actively accepting our

⁸ Those of us who are wild olive shoots have been grafted into the Olive Tree (Israel) and are supported by its roots. With this understanding, this promise and blessing that belongs to Israel, belongs also to those of us chosen by grace based on G-d's faithfulness to Israel.

responsibility to try, even in the smallest of ways, to bring light and warmth to others and to the world.

KISLEV - 16

One of the defining qualities of fire is that from one candle a thousand more can be lit without diminishing the original flame. The Midrash lauds this attribute by stating that when one candle is used to light another, the new light is lit and the other candle lacks nothing (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 13). Similarly, the Talmud shared the following idiom: "A candle for one - a candle for a hundred." (Shabbat 122)

KISLEV - 17

The more you share your light with others, the more strength G-d grants you to spread that light even further. Each individual is a potential lighthouse in a world of stormy seas.

KISLEV 18

Redemption comes through light - the [Light] of G-d.

KISLEV - 19

The phrase recited twice daily in the first paragraph of the Shema - "with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" - equals 737, the same as the word *shalhevet*, "a flame." This teaches us that true love of G-d should be experienced and expressed as a burning passion, an all-encompassing illuminated state of consciousness.

KISLEV - 20

The three aspects of the flame can be related to the three levels of love as expressed in the Shema:

"With all your heart" - the dark flame (blue and black)

"With all your soul" - the main body of the flame

"With all your might" - the surrounding aura of light.

KISLEV - 21

A beautiful mathematical gem linking...three words and concepts together is found in the numerical value of *chashmal*⁹, *choshech* (darkness), and *ohr* (light), which when taken together equal 913 - exactly the same value as the first word of the Torah - *Bereishit* [in the beginning] (913)!

⁹ A word mentioned in the vision of Ezekiel. "...defies translation, but whose two syllables mean silence (*chash*) and speaking (*mal*)."
Rabbi Avraham Ariel Trugman

KISLEV - 22

The Hebrew word for “praise” is hallel, the very same name as the *Hallel* prayer, a compilation of joyous psalms expressing existential awe and gratitude, which are recited all eight days of Chanukah, as well as on other holidays. Another meaning of the word hallel is “an aura of light,” as in the verse: “When He lit [from the root hallel] His candle over my head; by His light I would go through the darkness.” (Job 29:3)

KISLEV - 23

On a deeply personal level one of the most tangible and satisfying experiences of Divine light is when one opens themselves up to express their heartfelt thanks and praise for all of the goodness in their life. This authentic act of soul articulation often generates feelings of sincere gratitude for the privilege of being alive and able to have a relationship with the Creator.

KISLEV - 24

Light reveals G-d’s essence, yet paradoxically that very essence simultaneously “hides” within the garment of light. This insight provides a deeper understanding of the verse: “Bless G-d O my soul... You have donned majesty and splendor, cloaked in light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a curtain” (Psalms 104:1-2). This verse is recited when donning a *tallit*, a Jewish prayer shawl. Just as the tallit surrounds the body so too does G-d’s light enwrap both body and soul.

KISLEV - 25

It comes as no surprise that light, in Jewish thought, is connected with joy and hope in a number of different verses.¹⁰

KISLEV - 26

The first time the word “good” appears in the Torah is in conjunction with light: “And G-d saw that the light was good.” (Genesis 1:3)

KISLEV - 27

Aaron was obligated to not only light the lights, but to also make sure that they would stay lit on their own. Spiritually, this means that a superficial love of G-d born out of a feeling of obligation or a sense of duty is not enough, as that is something externally imposed from without. Rather, true love of G-d must be internally self-generated and expressed in a manner that assures it will be an intimate and passionate love capable of staying lit

¹⁰ See Proverbs 15:30, Esther 8:16, Psalm 97:11, and Proverbs 13:9

through all the inevitable ups and downs of life. This kind of commitment can only survive through a fiery, deeply felt, and fervent love.

KISLEV - 28

The root letters of the word, *bara*, “created”, also refer to the word for health, *bari*. Based on this grammatical hint, Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh teaches that the opening words of the Torah - “In the beginning G-d created” - can also be understood as - “In the beginning G-d [began to] heal...Creation’s primordial state of “sickness,” represented by the earth being “chaotic and void with darkness upon the abyss,” therefore begins the process of ultimate rectification when G-d shines His healing light into the all-encompassing darkness.

KISLEV - 29

One more beautiful connection between light and healing is seen in the words of King Solomon who poetically explained the cycles of life in terms of twenty-eight “times” arranged in fourteen pairs. One of these pairs is: “a time to kill and a time to heal,” (Ecclesiastes 3:3). The letters of the expression “a time to heal,” *ve’eit lirpo*, when permuted spell *pe’ulat ohr*, “an act of light.”
(Body Mind and Soul, Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh; 252, *Gal Einai*, Jerusalem)

KISLEV - 30

The root of “Chanukah” is *chet-nun-kaf*, from which the word *chinuch*, meaning ‘education,’ is derived. The light of Chanukah is not merely a physical light; rather, it is a spiritual light meant to be shared with and revealed to the entire world.

“LIGHT A CANDLE, NO MATTER HOW SMALL,
AND IT WILL DISPEL DARKNESS
NO MATTER HOW GREAT.”

SHINE!