

December 11, 2022

## Be the Shamash



Many of us are familiar with the Chanukah story that when the Hasmoneans defeated the Greeks, they entered the temple that had been defiled, and searched for a cruse of oil. Although they found only one cruse with sufficient oil to bring light for one day, by a miracle, the light lasted for 8 days.

Rabbis and scholars have questioned why it is a miracle of 8 days, if the Jewish people knew there was only enough oil for the first day. Wouldn't the miracle be that the oil lasted for the additional seven days? Rabbi David Hartman z'l suggests that the miracle was "in the community's willingness to light a small cruse of oil without reasonable assurance their efforts would be sufficient to complete the rededication of the Temple."\* Thus, the miracle was not just that the lamp burned for 8 days, but in the hope expressed by the lighting of the first candle.

Just like our ancestors were unsure that their small cruse of oil would be sufficient to complete the rededication of the Temple, we can never be certain that our efforts to make the world a better place will be sufficient. Nevertheless, like our ancestors lighting the lamp on the first day, we should embrace hope during this Chanukah season, and strive to be like the shamash by spreading our light, hoping for yet another miracle.

## 6th Night of Chanukah: The Candle of Righteousness

While we hope that you will find ways throughout the year to spread your light, choose to dedicate the 6th night of Chanukah to acts of righteous deeds. Some ways you could do so include:

- Donate gifts in lieu of giving gifts to your child or grandchild on the sixth night

- Take your child shopping for them to choose the gift to donate
- Forego gifts and instead donate to a meaningful charity
- Reflect and record your action and place it in your tzedek box
- Talk about tikkun olam - ways in which you can spread the light all through the year

When you light the 6th candle on Chanukah, consider including the following prayer:

Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'limdeinu  
l'hadlik ner shel tzedakah

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו ולימדינו להדליק נר של צדקה

Blessed are You Eternal, our God, who makes us holy through the performance of mitzvot, and inspires us to light the Candle of Righteousness.

