

# Hanukkah and Healing

*Sunset December 1 through Sunset December 9, 2010  
Reflections on the Festival of Lights*

When we light the Hanukkah candles, a blessing is said which praises God for having done miracles for our ancestors in their days and in our time (*"She'asah nisim l'avoteynu bayamim habem bazman hizeh"*).

This blessing contains an essential spirit of Hanukkah's message. While its historical reference is to the Maccabean refusal to give in to despair and internal oppression, it speaks too of the unexpected which can occur even today...the miraculous, in our own lives.

In saying this blessing, we pause from our early evening routines to kindle the utterly miraculous light of hope: hope that miracles indeed grace our daily lives. We become like the Maccabee warriors, asserting our strength to prevail with integrity and dignity in a world which seems at best benign and sometimes downright hostile to our survival. We activate the light of hope and strength within as we say the blessings and kindle the lights which praise God who makes miracles happen.

For those in the midst of health challenges kindling and nurturing the lights of Hanukkah can seem daunting. How to be a warrior of spirit when you are facing challenges? I suggest using the eight days of Hanukkah as a time of sustained meditation on eight spiritual qualities. As you light or gaze upon the lights of Hanukkah each night...dedicate each night to one of eight different spiritual qualities of healing, and cultivate its presence in your life:

1. Trust (*Emunah*). Kindle the light of a trusting spirit. Allow yourself to not give up on life, on hope, on relationship, on your health. Reflect on areas in your life where you have stopped trusting. Ask for the ability to open to the miraculous warming light of trust, renewed.
2. Patience (*Savlanut*). Kindle the light of a patient spirit. Although you might urgently want to know all the facts, have all the answers, work through the dissonance immediately, nurture your ability to be patient. As you watch the flame slowly burn the wax into light, reflect on the miracle of patience in your life to allow events to unfold in their own time, of your own being to emerge in its own rhythm.
3. Gratitude (*Hoda'ah*). Kindle the light of a grateful spirit. Reflect on three things for which you are honestly, profoundly grateful today, this day. Nurture the quality of gratitude in your life, savoring the miracle of perspective to help heal places of hurt and loss.
4. Abundance (*Shefa*). Kindle the light of an abundant spirit. Meditate upon the very gift of your life itself as an expression of the abundance in the universe.
5. Courage (*Ometz*). Kindle the light of a courageous spirit. Rest your gaze upon the inner reserves of courage. Let shine the fires of willingness—especially the willingness to step forth into your life's challenges and opportunities. Let them burn through areas of timidity, hesitation, doubt. Remember times when your courage prevailed through earlier trials. Believe in the miraculous abilities of your soul to craft itself in this world.

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6. Wisdom (*Hohmah*). Kindle the light of a wise spirit. Reflect on the ability within yourself to discern between falsehood and truth, between what is not needed and what is essential, between what is life affirming and what is destructive. As you reflect on the glow of the candles allow the light of your own discerning mind and heart to shine humbly yet clear, mindful of the miracles that ensue when a wise heart is applied to the challenges of life.
7. Love (*Ahava*). Kindle the flame of a loving spirit. Steady your gaze upon the burning of the flames and see the light as the shining of love. Allow this sense of love to penetrate even your own heart, again, bringing warmth deeply inside. Let it heal and forgive, soothing just where it needs to reach.
8. Peace (*Shalom*). Kindle the flame of a peaceful spirit. Understanding that deep peace reflects the integration of conflicting parts, allow all parts of your mind, your heart, your body, your spirit, to come present as you gaze upon the complete array of candles tonight. Focus on your ability to cultivate acceptance of all that is in your life, to honor even conflicting sentiments, awareness, and perspectives. Allow the blessing of peace to grace your life tonight.

**May the miracles of life shine brightly through you, "*bazman hazeh*," in our day.**

These preceding excerpts are from an article written by Rabbi Myriam Klotz 2002 for "Torah Reflections" series, a project of the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center, in collaboration with the Jewish Healing Center & the United Jewish Federation of San Diego. Reprinted by permission of Bay Area Jewish Healing Center.

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