

## Rolling Darkness Into Light: Chanukah 5782

<b>Increasing</b> , R. Rachel Barenblat	2
<b>In Praise of the Dark</b> , Trisha Arlin	3
<b>Mother to Light</b> , R. David Zaslow	4
<b>Great</b> , Trisha Arlin	5
<b>Lighting Our Way: A New <i>Hanerot Hallalu</i> for a New World</b> , R. David Evan Markus	6
<b>Not Diminished</b> , R. Rachel Barenblat	7
<b>Meditation After Candle Lighting: Setting Soul and Spirit on Fire</b> , R. Sonja Keren Pilz PhD	8
<b>On Sparks and Stars, Candles and Connection</b> , R. Dara Lithwick	10
<b>The Light of You</b> , R. David Zaslow	12
<b>About Us</b>	13

## Increasing

Shammai taught: the miracle was that the oil lasted  
though it dwindled daily. In remembrance  
(he said) kindle 8 lights to start, and  
remove one each night, ending  
with one brave flame  
flickering alone  
against  
dark.

I  
can't bear  
that thought.  
It feels too much  
like hope running out,  
like how awareness often  
diminishes as life approaches its end,  
like watching abundance vanish into smoke.

I want our lights -- our hopes, our loves --  
to increase day by day, even though  
in most years the solstice hasn't  
yet come. In this hemisphere  
darkness grows, but  
we can kindle care  
for each  
other

and  
for our  
fragile world,  
imperfect and  
connected. Give us, God,  
the ability to cup our hands  
around hope's tiny flames. We are  
Your candles: it's our job to shed light.

*R. Rachel Barenblat*

## In Praise of the Dark

Light candles, as one does, but consider this:

Over many millions of years  
Organisms evolved  
To thrive in the dark,  
Eyes big and reflective,  
Taking in the main chance,  
Mysterious only to those who slept  
While they flourished  
Under the stars and the waning moon  
Away from galumphing day hunters,  
Safe in their night.

For many thousands of years,  
Humans slept during the dark  
And rose in the light.  
And if we didn't feel safe at night  
We sat together in circles under the stars  
And told stories  
Of gods and miracles  
Of warriors and kings  
Of love and children  
And that mastodon we had for dinner.

But for the last hundred or so years,  
If we were lucky,  
We've lived in bright rooms,  
Safe behind doors at night,  
Unable to see past the streetlights  
to the stars.  
Instead of circles we sit in bubbles  
And the stories come from the outside,  
Sometimes helping us laugh and cry.  
Sometimes provoking pain  
and shared resentment,  
Each in our own well-lit isolation.

Tonight, perhaps,  
Don't be in such a rush  
To set up candles against the dark.  
Turn off that backyard lamp,  
So you can see the constellations  
And let the night animals breathe.  
Listen to the frightening ambient sounds  
That don't explain themselves to you.  
Then tell your own stories to each other,  
Of miracles and myths and what you had  
for dinner.

And praise the darkness.  
Praise the light.  
Praise it all.  
Amen.

*Trisha Arlin*

## Mother to Light

Darkness, mother to light,  
surrounds, embraces,  
nurses the light –  
holds each image  
in her arms;  
lets him be seen.

What energy is to what matters,  
darkness is to light.  
In darkness  
we see stars  
light years behind us  
in an ever present past.  
In light we see  
what's near  
in an ever present now.

Shammai  
teaches us:  
embrace the darkness  
for a change.

R. David Zaslow

## Great

A great miracle happened here?  
Well, I am not inclined this year  
To celebrate divine intervention.  
All these  
Political lies  
And  
Unproven remedies  
Of late,  
So much willful ignorance.  
I feel no need to harken back  
To dubious claims  
Of God's fingers in the pie  
In order to buttress up  
Autocrats  
Be they Seleucids, Maccabees or Trumps.

I don't care if it's fun for the kids.

A great something did happen here  
Though nothing that requires faith.  
Behind it was years and years  
Of research and science,  
Money  
And human effort.

Blessed Holy Wholeness,  
I give thanks for the vaccine.  
Amen.  
(And  
Harrumph)

*Trisha Arlin*

## Lighting Our Way: A New *Hanerot Hallalu* for a New World

We harness the miracle of Hanukkah’s remnant oil that lit the Temple’s lamps – the miracle that oil was there at all, enough to last and re-dedicate what was defiled. Today we need cleaner fuels and sustainable ways, enough to transform and re-dedicate the temple of our planet. Like our ancestors who composed Hanukkah’s *Al Ha-Nisim* (“For the Miracles”) to recall that Hanukkah’s candles honor miracles and not consumption, we too need reminding that some things – the most important things – are exactly not for us to use up. Only by acting on this wisdom can we all rouse to re-dedicate this world and redeem this planet.

May these candles  
that we kindle  
be for the miracles  
and for the salvations  
and for the wonders  
we will do with You  
for our descendants  
and for our ailing planet  
in these urgent days  
for times to come.

*Ha-neirot hallalu  
anu madlikin  
al ha-nisim  
v'al ha-teshuot  
v'al ha-niflaot  
she-na'aseh imkha  
l'tze'etza'einu  
ul'olam h<sub>o</sub>lah shelanu  
ba-yamim d'hofim ha-eileh  
le-atid lavo.*

הַנְּרוֹת הַלְלוּ  
אֲנֵנוּ מִדְּלִיקִין  
עַל הַנִּסִּים  
וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת  
וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת  
שֶׁנַּעֲשֶׂה עִמָּךְ  
לְצִאֲצֵאֵינוּ  
וְלַעֲוֹלָם חוֹלָה שְׁלָנוּ  
בְּיָמִים דְּחוּפִים הָאֵלֶּה  
לְעֵתִיד לְבוֹא.

Just as holy servants of old  
whose audacity rededicated  
their world defiled,  
for all eight days  
of Hanukkah  
may these candles  
inspire purification.  
We claim no power  
to use them  
except to see them,  
to arouse gratitude  
for Your sake,  
for the miracles  
and for the wonders  
and for the salvations.

*K'mo kohanim kedoshim  
nitzhu la-hanokh  
et olamam ha-tamei,  
b'khol shmonat y'mei  
ha-Hanukkah  
ha-neirot hallalu  
kodesh hein,  
V'ein lanu r'shut  
l'hishtameish ba-hein  
ella lirotan bilvad  
k'dei l'hodot  
lish'mekha  
al ha-nisim  
v'al ha-niflaot  
v'al ha-teshuot.*

כְּמוֹ כוֹהֲנִים קְדוֹשִׁים  
נִצְחוּ לְהַנּוֹךְ  
אֶת עוֹלָמָם הַטָּמֵא,  
בְּכָל שְׁמוֹנַת יָמֵי  
הַחֲנֻכָּה  
הַנְּרוֹת הַלְלוּ  
קֹדֶשׁ הֵינּוּ,  
וְאֵין לָנוּ רְשׁוּת  
לְהִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶן  
אֶלָּא לְרֵאוֹתָן בְּלִבָּד  
כְּדֵי לְהוֹדוֹת  
לְשִׁמְךָ  
עַל הַנִּסִּים  
וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת  
וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת.

**We will do with You** – Instead of the miracles “You did for us”: environmental change must come by our own actions in partnership with the One we call God. **For our descendants ... in these days for times to come** – Instead of “for our ancestors in those days”: we must act now for the future.

R. David Evan Markus

## Not Diminished

A candle is not diminished when it lights  
another flame. Hope is not diminished when  
it leaps from heart to heart like wildfire.

A seed is not diminished when it lets go  
and roots unfurl and pale green tendrils sprout.  
The things that matter most aren't zero-sum.

They defy the laws of physics, conservation  
of matter, chemical processes of combustion.  
Even when we're far apart, or quarantined,

the light from your soul's candle reaches mine  
and between us -- look: we blaze like the light  
of creation, more than the sum of our parts.

*R. Rachel Barenblat*

*Chanukah is early this year. We increase the light—only to enter a period of increasing darkness in the northern hemisphere. Winter will last, for many of us, for at least another three months. The reading that follows is meant to be prayed, aloud or silently, after extinguishing the havdalah candle and kindling the Chanukah lights.*

**Meditation After Candle Lighting:  
Setting Our Soul (*n'shamah*) and Spirit (*ru'ach*) on Fire  
(נר / NeR / “Candle” in Hebrew)**

I have seen many candles burn,  
And many flames gone dark.  
Even within each single flame, there is a dark line,  
A black, reddish glowing  
Reminding me that the brightest flames  
Feed off of some sort of darkness.

I don't like dualist language  
Of soul, mind, and body;  
White fire,  
Red fire,  
Black wick.  
I focus on flow and connections;  
The flow of the air,  
The eating of fire,  
The rise of the smoke,  
The light in our eyes.

I look  
Into the flames:  
White fire, red fire, void, and wick;  
Head, heart, belly, and legs;  
An entire human dancing their way.  
Behind my eyeballs,  
Just under my eyebrows,  
I can feel heat rising  
As I sit, Lotus Jew,  
And meditate.

Light and fire  
From within  
Echoing the flames  
Dancing in front of us.

I want to set myself on fire  
So the light will keep on burning  
Even after the last candles burnt.

I will keep the black fire close to my heart  
To remember that I can trust its verdict  
To open and close, stay or leave, to welcome  
And to let go.

I will keep the red fire close to my belly,  
To remember when to relax and when to take a stance  
When to hold my place, and when to step back.

I will keep the white fire in my head.  
Like a crown, it will burn with penetrable clearness;  
Its heat repeating the dance of my breath.

I am a candle.  
A candle for me.  
*Ner Adonai Nishmat Adam...*  
“God’s light is the Human heart” (Proverbs 20:27)  
I won’t hide my self from You.

**Questions to take with you:**

1. Where in your body do you feel your own heat most poignantly?
2. Imagine a flame burning within you. In which direction does its flame draw you?
3. The flame within you is powerful; and it needs protection. Who among the people surrounding you nourishes it? Who is able to connect with it?

*R. Sonja K. Pilz, PhD*

## On Sparks and Stars, Candles and Connection

*Chanukah* - dedication.

Eight nights of thirty six lights,  
As the wind howls through naked trees, bereft of leaves (waiting for the cover glow of snow),  
If we're lucky, the stars glitter and flicker above<sup>1</sup>  
An invitation to balance, above and below.

What are we dedicating ourselves to?

Winter months in the northern hemisphere mean  
Cold days with long shadows as the sun stays tucked in the horizon.  
We're all covered up in our tuques and parkas,  
Protected, shielded from the elements, but also from each other.

It takes dedication to stay connected.

Last month, when Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary May Simon<sup>2</sup> rededicated those  
Who serve as Members of the Queen's Privy Council  
At her residence, an Inuit qulliq<sup>3</sup> was lit, a tradition from home  
Representing light and warmth of family and community.

It takes dedication to lead.

There's something about candlelight:  
The warm reds and oranges and yellows  
The flickering dancing heat spark,  
Gathering us together around its glow.

It takes dedication to keep the past present and future.

Chanukah - an invitation to connection.  
To the holy sparks inside and out,  
Above and below and all around  
Especially in winter's cold shadows.

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<sup>1</sup> That is if we can see the stars. Too much light (pollution) hinders our ability to discern...

<sup>2</sup> Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary May Simon was sworn in on July 26, 2021, as Canada's first Indigenous governor general. She is the 30th governor general since Confederation. [Read more about her here](#). Members of the federal cabinet were [sworn in](#) on October 26, 2021 after the federal election.

<sup>3</sup> A qulliq is a traditional Inuit lamp; [read more about it here](#).

This Chanukah, may we dedicate ourselves -

To connection under all our layers  
To the God spark within  
To candles lit from the same *shamash*<sup>4</sup>,  
Warmth begetting warmth; love begetting love.

*R. Dara Lithwick*

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<sup>4</sup> Lit. the utility candle, the candle used to light the other candles on the Chanukiah.

## The Light of You

The light of you  
from a far star years away.  
I swear it's now  
but know it was  
a light from long ago.  
And now my light  
from this star here,  
our sun, will travel far  
to meet your eyes.  
To you it will be now  
in years to come  
you'll swear.  
When I say that I recall  
and you say, "Now I see!"  
This I've learned:  
my past is your tomorrow,  
as yours is my today.  
What was so long ago to you,  
to me is now.  
And so I say, "Now, I see!"

*R. David Zaslow*

## About Us

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