

Chanukah: Teaching the Fundamentals of Covenant, Leadership and Spirituality

1. Covenant

Holiday: Covenant is our partnership with God. Similar to raising children, the more mature we become as a nation, the greater contribution humans must make to the partnership.

a.

And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which God had created to do .	וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱ-לֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּו שְׁבַת מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱ-לֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.
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(Genesis 2:3)

That they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice.	וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶרֶךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט
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(Genesis 18:19)

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the hearing of the people, and they said, "all that the Lord has spoken we will do , and obey."	וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית, וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם; וַיֹּאמְרוּ, כֹּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע
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(Exodus 24:7)

b.

הג' מועדות שנתנו לנו הקב"ה הם תורה שבכתב שמפורשין בתורה והקב"ה נתן לנו זמני קודש אשר נתקדשו בעת הבריאה שהכל בתורה נברא. והם עדות שהקב"ה בחר בישראל ויש לו התקרבות אליהם שהרי מסר לנו מועדות שלו וזהו שם מועד מלשון עדות.

וחנוכה ופורים הם מועדות שזכו להם בני ישראל במעשיהן נקרא תורה שבעל פה והם עדות שהם בוחרים בהקב"ה ומיוחדים אליו ושמעשיהן מעוררין אותו יתברך שהרי חידשו במעשיהם זמנים מקודשים.

The three festivals God gave us are commanded expressly in the written Torah. God gave us those holy times, sanctified since Creation, for all was created through the Torah. They bear witness **that the blessed Holy One has chosen Israel** and is close to them, giving them his holy testimony. The word *mo'ed* used for these festivals is related to *edut* (testimony).

But Hanukkah and Purim are special times that Israel merited by their own deeds. These are called oral Torah; **they are testimony that Israel chose the blessed Holy One**. Israel are joined to God and their deeds arouse God, for here they are capable of creating new sacred times by their deeds.

(Sefat Emet, Hanukkah 5636 s.v. *Adoni Mori*. Translation by Prof. Arthur Green)

וחנוכה הארה מחג הסוכות. ופורים מחג השבועות. ומחג הפסח מקוים אנו להיות עוד.

And Hanukkah received its light from Sukkot. And Purim from Shavuot. And one day, hopefully, Pesach will have its counterpart holiday.

(Sefat Emet, Hanukkah 5641 s.v. *Hanukkah u'Purim*)

c.

One would suspect that as *Am Yisrael* assumes more responsibility, God is felt to a lesser degree. The opposite is the case. When the Jewish People is first formed, God reveals Himself intensely at Sinai, soon after in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), and ultimately in the Temple. After the destruction of the Temple, the idea of *Mishkan* evolved into *Shekhina*; in fact, the noun *Shekhina* as a name for God never appears in the Bible. It's a post-biblical idea. The God who particularly appeared in the *Mishkan* manifests as *Shekhina* – literally, the Indwelling, the God who is omnipresent. As the Midrash states, אֵין מְקוֹם פְּנוּי בְּלִי שְׂכִינָה – “there is no place devoid of God.” Thus, at this stage, God is not less present but more.

(Holistic Prayer)

d.

Certainly in the hiddenness within the hiddenness Even there, God, may He be blessed, is found. Even behind all the difficult situations You experience I (the Lord) am present.	ואפילו בהסתרה שבתוך ההסתרה בוודאי גם שם נמצא השם יתברך גם אחרי הדברים הקשים העוברים עליך אני עומד
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(*Likkutei Moharan* 1:56:3 s.v. *u'veyom habikkurim*)

2. Leadership

First candle: If there was enough oil to light for the first day, and the miracle extended for another seven, why is Chanukah an eight day holiday?

Speak Out Because It's Right, Not Because It's Popular

- Identify a Need
- Leadership is Change
- Change is Resisted
- Initiators are Outsiders

a.

<p>“Avram the Hebrew was told” (Genesis 14:13)... Rabbi Yehudah says: the entire world is on one side and he is on the other side.</p>	<p>וַיִּגַד לְאַבְרָם הָעִבְרִי... רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר כָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ מֵעֵבֶר אֶחָד וְהוּא מֵעֵבֶר אֶחָד.</p>
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(Bereishit Rabbah 42:13)

<p>AND AFTERWARDS MOSES AND AARON CAME — But the elders slipped away one by one from behind Moses and Aaron until every-one of them had slipped away before they arrived at the palace, because they were afraid to go there.</p>	<p>ואחר באו משה ואהרן וגו'. אָבֵל הַזְקֵנִים נִשְׁמְטוּ אֶחָד אֶחָד מֵאַחֵר מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן, עַד שֶׁנִּשְׁמְטוּ כָּלֵם קֶדֶם שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ לְפֶלֶטִיּוֹן, לְפִי שֶׁיִּרְאוּ לְלָכֶת...</p>
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(Rashi, Exodus 5:1 based on Exodus 5:14)

b.

<p>The human being is called a walker, always having to go from one rung to another...</p> <p>“Go from your land” – a person should always keep walking. “To [that which] I will show you” – always some new attainment. This is why the person is called a “walker.”</p>	<p>שהאדם נקרא מהלך שצריך תמיד לילך ממדריגה למדריגה</p> <p>לך לך לעולם צריך להיות מהלך אל אשר אראך תמיד השגה חדשה לכן נקרא האדם מהלך</p>
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(Sefat Emet 5664 s.v. Be' midrash)

c.

The establishment (i.e., the organized community) is rarely the first to introduce change. This is because change involves taking risks, and the establishment cannot afford to fail. Furthermore, the establishment is slow moving; mired in red tape and bureaucracy; weighted down by process and committee meetings – often losing touch with the *amcha*, the very people they are serving. This is why change most often begins from leaders who are not encumbered by establishment constraints.

(Open Up the Iron Door)

- Expand the base
 - Passion
 - Tenacity
 - Out front, but not too far
 - Making Space

3. Spirituality

Lights of Chanukah: In Chassidic literature, the lights of the Chanukah candles are compared to bedikat chametz, the candlelight search for leaven before Passover. But this time, we're searching within ourselves, to bring light to the world. Every person has the potential to become a ner Chanukah, a Chanukah light.

a.

<p>It is written: "A lamp[candle] of the Lord is the soul of a human, searching out all of our inner chambers." (Mishlei 20:27) The Talmud notes that searching requires a candle...</p> <p>This means that there is a certain pure place within each of us, but it is indeed deeply hidden.</p>	<p>כתיב נר ה' נשמת אדם חופש כו' חדרי בטן (משלי כ:ז). ובגמרא "חיפוש מנרות..."</p> <p>היינו שיש נקודה אחת טהורה בכל איש (ישראל) רק שהיא נסתרת וגנוזה באמת.</p>
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(Sefat Emet 5631, s.v. Ketiv)

b.

The activist grounded exclusively in physical defense – demonstrations, rallies, protest, political lobbying – doesn't understand the true nature, essence and higher purpose of activism. If I am a Jew only to fight anti-Semitism, that is negative Judaism. Negative Judaism will not endure.

If, however, I am a Jew because I appreciate the Sabbath, I treasure the Jewish laws of business ethics and all the laws and rituals that ennoble the life of the Jew, and I devote time to reading Jewish books and Torah study – that is positive Judaism. Positive Judaism endures.

(Spiritual Activism)

c.

<p>[We thank you] for the miracles...and for the wars...you delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, many into the hands of the few...</p>	<p>על הנסים ...ועל המלחמות... מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים ורבים ביד מעטים...</p>
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(Al Hanissim)

<p>These lights we kindle...</p> <p>All eight days of Chanukah, these lights are sacred.</p>	<p>הנרות הללו אנו מדליקין וכל שמונת ימי החנוכה, הנרות הללו קדש הן</p>
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(Hanerot Halalu)



4. A Final Thought: From Darkness Comes Light

Let me explain why I have employed the term “logotherapy” as the name for my theory. Logos is a Greek word that denotes “meaning”! Logo-therapy focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man’s search for such a meaning. According to logotherapy, the striving to find a meaning in one’s life is the primary motivational force in man. That is why I speak of a will to meaning in contrast to the pleasure principle (or, as we could also term it, the will to pleasure) on which Freudian psychoanalysis is centered, as well as in contrast to the will to power stressed by Adlerian psychology.

(Viktor Frankl, Man’s Search for Meaning, pp. 153-154)

I have sought Your nearness With all my heart have I called You And going out to meet You I found You coming toward me.	דְּרִשְׁתִּי קְרִבְתְּךָ בְּכֹל לִבִּי קִרְאתִיךָ וּבְצֵאתִי לְקִרְאתֶךָ לְקִרְאתִי מִצְּאֵתֶךָ
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(Heinrich Brody, Selected Poems of Yehuda Halevi, trans. Nina Salaman)