

Shedding Light Together

I don't know about you, but with the abrupt shift to Eastern Standard Time (EST), making it darker and lighter earlier, my body clock is struggling to catch up. And I bet that I am not alone. This is a lesson to us that our constitutions are so sensitive to the world around us that even a single hour's difference can make us a bit disoriented.

From Thanksgiving to Hanukkah and beyond, human beings at once seek to acknowledge their fragility and to overcome it. Thanksgiving itself is a recognition that in any new frontier, we cannot make it on our own; we can only make our way with the help of others, and especially with the aid of some Divine inspiration. Hanukkah, begun as a secular political holiday celebrating the liberty of the Jewish People, is now celebrated with an eye to the connection between our ancestors and God through Temple services and adherence to Jewish Law. Both holidays, however, speak to the abundance that comes to those who trust in their fellow and in God, and emphasize the safety that comes through community.

So where does that lead us? Perhaps that is obvious: toward each other. We are made full, our selves and souls satiated, through the feasting on the blessings we share with each other. Jews like community (consider the *minyan*) so much so that our version of Thanksgiving – some might say that that would be Passover – only feels right when shared with lots of people. So it is with our country's "civic *Pesach*," Thanksgiving: We are made full not just by our consumption of many foods but by our sharing that meal with many people. Hanukkah, however you see it, follows the same pattern: the more people, the more warmth . . . and the more light. And, to recite the obvious: the more light, the more we know that we are a part of something greater, something we call "community" or "Peoplehood."

As you consider how to bring the light of the season into your life and into the lives of those around you, consider the following: Hanukkah was created to commemorate the victory of self-determination over autocracy, of doing it yourself over going along. What better way to bring light into your life than to share your life with others. The gateway to such a bold approach is obvious: Temple Beth Shalom. Whether it is participating in our exciting trip to Israel, simply attending our upcoming Hanukkah party, making a greater commitment to connecting with your fellow congregants by attending services more often, or giving more generously to the shul to ensure its continued health, make no mistake: You are like a light on a *Hanukkah* (Hanukkah Menorah). Your light may be bright alone, but with each of your neighbors', together you create a bold light in the midst of our darkest time of year.

And remember: It may be true that words are only words, but it is equally true that our actions, in particular the ways we illuminate the darkness around us, say much about the power of our community and the brightness of our future.

As your Rabbi, I ask you to join us as we seek to lighten each other's load and to light up each other's path ahead. No matter which one is your fancy, let's do so together.

May you find all the light you need and may your candle burn ever brightly . . . in the company of those whom you love and who love you.

Rabbi Gerald R. Fox