



Light in the Time of Corona

I love the menorah. As one of the oldest of Jewish symbols, it has a special attachment to Jewish history, survival and pride. In fact the mitzvah of Chanukkah is to light the menorah and place it in the window so that all can see that you are observing the festival of lights. This mitzvah is called, “Pirsoom Mitzvah”- literally “the publishing of the mitzvah”. Its like telling the whole world, “look here, this is a Jewish home, and I am proud.”

And yes, there are times in Jewish history that the menorah purposefully has been moved inside, in a place that is someone more hidden. The light obscured to the outside world. It isn't because we aren't proud to be Jews, it is because, being Jewish was met with anti-Semitism. Many felt it was unsafe to draw attention to our religion.

I hope that at least in today's America, we are unafraid to light our menorah. I know that there is still anti-semitism. But thankfully, we also live in a time of greater enlightenment, and acceptance. Ironically, both can be true.

But there is another message about the menorah that also strikes me as particularly important. The tradition teaches us to light each candle using a “shamash”—“a helper candle”. As one candle is used to light another, we learn *that light can be shared and it is not diminished.*

I love that thought!

Think about it for a moment. You can do something kind for another, and it takes nothing away from you. You can perform an act of love, friendship, a random act of kindness, and the light within you is transferred to another person. And your light within burns just as bright. It's that simple.

It is a bit of cliché to say that if each of us did more for others, then our world would be a better place. But it would be more than a cliché if each of us took a moment or two and followed it. What if we looked for opportunities to be the *shamash*? Waiting in line for a cup of coffee, we bought a cup for the person behind us. Leaving an exceptionally generous tip to a waiter/waitress. Offering to help a neighbor who might need help with simple things, but is embarrassed to impose. Changing a light bulb or the air filter might seem like simple things, but when one is no longer safe to climb a ladder, a little bit of help is appreciated. How about writing a letter from the heart to a friend for no reason at all. None of these things costs much but require a bit of effort and thoughtfulness.

Sometimes, its difficult to see these opportunities. That's where the light comes in.

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