

The Jewish **Post & Opinion**

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Shortly after my last editorial where I mention a priest who left only five possessions when he died, I got the following message, "Travel light, live light, spread the light, be the light." No, it wasn't in a fortune cookie. It was on a small piece of paper stapled to the string at the end of a tea bag. I find these short quotes to be uplifting and wise.

This message is appropriate for any time of the year, but especially during Hanukkah with shorter days and longer nights. Also during this time of year, so much focus is on material things. The other messages we receive from manufacturers and retailers make us think that we cannot be happy unless we have every new gadget, appliance, technical device, automobile, jewelry and piece of clothing that comes into style.

To bring the spiritual back into the picture, I am reprinting most of my column written two years ago at this time.

Because in my part of the world it is very cold and dark, I decided to create the following eight meditations for Hanukkah. These can be done before the candles are lit, after the blessings and songs are sung when the candles are burning or even after they go out.

First night: Imagine bringing the light from the one candle to any place in your body where there may be a health concern or simply little aches and pains. Let the warm sensation from the light relax the tight muscles around the pain. Feel the area improving from the healing glow of the light and all stiffness and soreness is releasing.

Second night: Feel free to repeat the first night meditation knowing that the light is double in strength. Now think of any emotional pain you are feeling. Are you missing a close friend or relative who had been celebrating Hanukkah with you every year? Were you expecting a raise or simply a holiday bonus but did not get it? Let the light from the candles whirl in your mind, dissolving all of the sadness and bitterness replacing it with the thought that something good is just around the corner.

Third night: One can repeat night one or any of the previous night's meditations on any of the upcoming nights as needed, knowing that the light will be even brighter than it was the first time around. Now that you are feeling stronger, think about any concerns with your family or close friends. Is one of them in harm's way? Grieving a loss? Not getting along with a spouse? Shine the light all around them bringing with it a sense of love and peace.

Fourth night: Are there challenges in your neighborhood, your synagogue or the city where you live? Some congregants want to allow women on the bimah and others do not. Some Jews want a menorah in a public place and others oppose it. Let the light

swirl around the dark places where differences of opinion are. Imagine it shining brightly over the situation bringing new ideas to encourage a solution or compromise.

Fifth night: As the lights continue getting brighter, think about the state where you live. Are there challenges in your state? Some citizens want prayers before the legislative sessions and other want separation of church and state. Let the bright light swirl around those citizens with opposing points of view and help them to see both sides of the situation and resolve to make an effort to understand each other. Maybe a solution will eventually come from that.

Sixth night: The bright lights from the candles are filling up the room. Are there challenges in your country? Let's see. No shortage here: the economy, the stock market, the bailouts, adjusting to the new administration, gays and lesbians struggling for equal rights, racial prejudices, to name a few. Let the bright lights shine over these very difficult topics and bring with it the needed patience and compassion to work through them.

Seventh night: Even brighter lights are just in time for the planet's woes. What about the challenges facing the world that we all share together? Again no shortages: the environment including safe drinking water and global warming, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Let's all shed some light on these ordeals and see what becomes visible when the darkness is dispersed. Maybe some fresh insights will come.

Eighth night: Tonight the lights are very bright! We have experienced how the warmth and glow of the lights have been a source of comfort and joy during this dark time. This is how it was when God was creating the world and it was very dark. Then God said, "Let there be light!" That same powerful light is available to us now in this dark, cold season and in this difficult time to help us heal ourselves and heal our world.

Happy Hanukkah!

Jennie Cohen 12-1-10

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