



# IDEAS TO ILLUMINATE



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# INTRODUCTION

Every light and every night of Chanukah  
brings something new.

A new idea

A new perspective

A new inspiration

A new light into your life

We hope you enjoy these 8 ideas to  
illuminate your life.



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# HADLAKOT NEROT

## IN A WORD: LIGHT

אור

Two men needed to traverse a long dark tunnel. One had a flashlight and was able to make his way through the tunnel unharmed. The other didn't have a flashlight and had no choice but to learn how to see in the dark.

In the beginning of the Second Temple period we were lost. God was no longer speaking directly to us through prophets. We found ourselves navigating the darkness and confusion of this world without the beacons of light we had always relied upon.

Then Chanukah happened.

We were shown that there is a way to turn darkness into light, not by dispelling the dark but by learning how to find one's way in the dark. And by doing so, we become the light.



*A little bit of light dispels a lot of darkness.*

**-R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Founder of Chabad**

מעט מן האור מגררת  
הרבה מן החושך



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# AL HANISSIM

## IN A WORD: MIRACLE

מַדְבָּר

Life can feel very normal. We don't typically see angels or receive divine prophecy. It's not every day that we see miracles. Or is it?

There are approximately 100 billion neurons in our brains—each formed perfectly—that allow us to see, smell, feel, hear and shape our experiences.

Did you know that the earth is about 93 million miles away from the sun, travels at 67,000 miles per hour, and maintains just the perfect distance for us to stay alive?

The Hebrew word for miracle, *Nes*, has another meaning—banner. A miracle, like a banner, is an ever-present reminder of the truth. Without care and notice, however, it can easily blend into the background of existence, hidden in plain sight. Life is full of miracles and it's up to us to spot them.

“ *There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle* ”

**- Albert Einstein, Physicist**

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# THE DIRECTION WE LIGHT

## IN A WORD: GROWTH

מעלין

### **Chanukah Growth Meditation:**

- Give attention to the darkness around you that may be weighing you down.
- Raise your candle and prepare to extinguish that heaviness as you light the candles.
- Outstretch your arm to kindle the candles one at a time and feel that weight lift away as the flames grow.
- Watch the candles flicker and capture this moment for those times when it gets dark again.
- Take a breath and recognize that growth spurts often happen amidst the darkness, not the light.
- How can the darkness help you grow instead of holding you back?



*The tiny seed knew that in order to grow, it needed to be dropped in dirt, covered in darkness, struggle to reach the light.*



**- Sandra Kring, author**

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# GUIDING LIGHT

## IN A WORD: SPIRITUAL

### תורה

In what section would a librarian classify the Torah? It doesn't fit neatly into any specific genre, containing elements of history, psychology, law, and science, resisting easy classification. Understanding why God gave us the Torah could help our poor librarian resolve this dilemma.

God as the Creator of the world, gave us the Torah as an instruction manual, to guide us as to how to best live our lives. If we had to find a section of the library for the Torah, we would place it in the guidebook section. A guidebook contains history, stories, laws, science etc and the Torah is no different. Blessed are we that God gave us such a precious gift.

*Adapted from a class given by Rabbi David Fohrman*

ברוך הוא אלוקינו שבראנו לכבודו והבדילנו מן התועים  
ונתן לנו תורת אמת וחיי עולם נטע בתוכנו

“Blessed is He, our God, Who created us for His glory, and set us apart from those who go astray and gave us the Torah of truth, and eternal life He implanted within us.”

**-The Siddur, Jewish Prayer Book**

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# SHAMESH

## IN A WORD: SERVICE

שמש

Wherever we go, whatever we do, whenever we observe things, our attention is drawn to the main attraction. For instance, in a movie we focus on the actors and at the amusement park we rush to the roller coasters. In school, our attention is focused on our teachers at the front of the room.

However, in every situation there are those people and/or things behind the scenes that make everything work. They don't look for the attention but assist, quietly on the side, ensuring everything works smoothly. It might be the lighting people, the popcorn guy, or the custodian, but they are just as important to the final product. On Chanukah, the shamesh, the helper candle, fills this role. Quietly assisting in the lighting of all the other candles, not counted as part of the mitzvah but ensuring that the mitzvah gets done.



גדולה שמושה של תורה יותר מלמודה  
*Service of Torah Scholars is greater than studying the Torah.*



**-Talmud, Brachot 7b**

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# MEHADRIN MIN HAMEHADRIN

## IN A WORD: IDEAL

מהדרין

“ *Good is the enemy of great. And that is one of the key reasons why we have so little that becomes great. We don't have great schools, principally because we have good schools. We don't have great government, principally because we have good government. Few people attain great lives, in large part because it is just so easy to settle for a good life. The vast majority of companies never become great, precisely because the vast majority become quite good – and that is their main problem.* ”

- **Jim Collins**, American researcher, author, and speaker

Okay team! We won the semi-finals. It was a great series. Nobody even thought we would make it this far. At this point, let's just throw in the towel, pack our bags, and go home— we had a nice run,” said nobody ever. Obviously, we should appreciate every little accomplishment we have. But that also needs to be balanced with a constant striving to achieve more. We want to win the championship.

Technically, the Chanukah miracle never even needed to happen. Given the extenuating circumstances, it would have been totally permissible to use impure oil for the kindling of the Temple light. So why did we insist on only using pure oil, ultimately requiring God to provide pure oil through means of a miracle? The heroes of the Chanukah story understood the importance of always striving for the ideal, and not simply settling for something good. The Chanukah miracle teaches us to always be learning more, doing more, and growing more.

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# STANDING UP FOR IDEALS

## IN A WORD: STRUGGLE

מלחמות

“You may have to fight the battle more than once to win it.”

**-Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister**

The Chanukah miracle is a story of the Maccabees, who although were tremendously outnumbered and overpowered, defeated the Greek Army. The Maccabees, with passion, courage, and strength, were willing to risk everything to fight for what they believed in. For them, living their lives as proud Jews, without the cruel restrictions of the Greeks, was worth fighting for.

On Chanukah we are given the ability to stand up and fight for what we believe in. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks beautifully reminds us, “Never believe that a handful of dedicated people can’t change the world. Inspired by faith, they can. The Maccabees did then. So can we today.” As a Jewish nation, we still have battles. We still are confronted with antisemitism. We learn from the Maccabees to stand up. But even more importantly, we must learn from the Chanukah story that we will be victorious.

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# PIRSUMEI NISA

## IN A WORD: SHARING

שיתוף

There's nothing quite like taking in the warm glow of the Chanukah menorah just after lighting its candles. We wait for the experience all year long. But, the Talmud (Shabbos 21b) explains the emphasis of the mitzvah is actually not for us to see those lights, but for us to make sure others can see those lights. Sharing is caring. So we place the menorah in a location visible to others, either by the window or even outside the doorway of the home.

In the Chanukah story, the Greeks tried not only to destroy us physically, but spiritually as well. When we confidently display our lit menorahs, we show the world how grateful we are to still be here, how proud we are to be Jewish, and how much we strive to be an ohr la-goyim, a light unto the nations.



*'What's mine is yours and what's yours is yours' -  
this is the perspective of a pious person*

**- Ethics of The Fathers 5:13**

שלי שלך ושליך  
שלך, חסיד



