



THE FIRE YOU  
NEVER SAW

# The Fire You Never Saw

For as long as you can remember, you've seen the menorahs come out of their boxes, the candles set in place. You've heard the sizzle of the oil as it scalds the potato grates for a heavenly holiday treat. A tightly wrapped present sits ready and waiting just for you. It's that time of year again! Chanukah has arrived - and you couldn't be happier.

You know that all of this celebration commemorates a miracle of many centuries ago. Just one small jug of oil burned and burned for eight whole days without being consumed. You learned the story as young as a toddler. But, this scene rings a bell to another significant screenshot of our past, to another fire that miraculously burned.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- *Where do we have something in the Torah itself that reminds us of Chanukah's miracle with the oil?*
- *What were the distinguishing characteristics of this miracle?*
- *Can you think of another fire that burned, but was not consumed?*



<b>Shemos 3:1-2</b>	
<p>Moshe was pasturing the flocks of Yisro, his father in law, the chief of Midian, and he led the flocks after the free pastureland, and he came to the mountain of God, to Chorev.</p>	<p><b>א</b> וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת צֹאן יִתְרוֹ חֹתְנוֹ פֶּהָן מִדִּין וַיִּגְהַג אֶת הַצֹּאן אַחֵר הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּבֹא אֶל הַר הָאֱלֹהִים חֹרֵב:</p>
<p>An angel of God appeared to him in a flame of fire from within the thorn bush, and behold, the thorn bush was burning with fire, but the thorn bush was not being consumed.</p>	<p><b>ב</b> וַיֵּרָא מֵלֶאדָּה יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלֶבֶת אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה הַסִּנֵּה בֹעֵר בָּאֵשׁ וְהַסִּנֵּה אֵינּוֹ אֹכֵל:</p>

The bush burned for hours, but was not consumed. Centuries later, in the story of Chanukah, oil burned for hours, days, but was not consumed either. Chanukah can be considered the last great miracle in our national history that we commemorate by means of a holiday. The bush burning may be considered our *first* great national miracle, for from there the redemption from the exile in Egypt first began, leading up to our birth as a nation.

These two miraculous events serve as the bookends of our people. Let's explore through the story of the burning bush the meaning of the Chanukah light.

<b>Shemos 3:3-4</b>	
<p>So Moshe said, "Let me turn now and see this great spectacle - why does the thorn bush not burn up?"</p>	<p><b>ג</b> וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרֶה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה אֵת הַמֵּרְאָה הַגְּדֹל הַזֶּה מִדּוּעַ לֹא יִבְעַר הַסִּינָי</p>
<p>And God saw that he had turned to see, and He called to him from within the thorn bush, and He said, "Moshe, Moshe!" And he said, "Here I am!"</p>	<p><b>ד</b> וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי סָר לִרְאוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּינָי וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי:</p>



**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- *Why does the Torah have to mention that Moshe turned to look at the burning bush?*
- *Isn't it obvious that if Moshe approached the bush, he had to have seen it?*
- *We are even told "God saw that he had turned to see" and only afterwards "called to him from within the thorn bush", further calling our attention to this point. It almost seems as if, had Moshe not looked at the bush as he*

*did, God may not have approached him at all. What's with all of the emphasis on seeing?*

***"Pearls Before Breakfast: Can one of the nation's great musicians cut through the fog of a D.C. rush hour? Let's find out."***

*By Gene Weingarten, The Washington Post*

HE EMERGED FROM THE METRO AT THE L'ENFANT PLAZA STATION AND POSITIONED HIMSELF AGAINST A WALL BESIDE A TRASH BASKET. By most measures, he was nondescript: a youngish white man in jeans, a long-sleeved T-shirt and a Washington Nationals baseball cap. From a small case, he removed a violin. Placing the open case at his feet, he shrewdly threw in a few dollars and pocket change as seed money, swiveled it to face pedestrian traffic, and began to play.

It was 7:51 a.m. on Friday, January 12, the middle of the morning rush hour. In the next 43

minutes, as the violinist performed six classical pieces, 1,097 people passed by.

Each passerby had a quick choice to make, one familiar to commuters in any urban area where the occasional street performer is part of the cityscape: Do you stop and listen? Do you hurry past with a blend of guilt and irritation, aware of your cupidity but annoyed by the unbidden demand on your time and your wallet? Do you throw in a buck, just to be polite? Does your decision change if he's really bad? What if he's really good? Do you have time for beauty? Shouldn't you? What's the moral mathematics of the moment?

On that Friday in January, those private questions would be answered in an unusually public way. No one knew it, but the fiddler standing against a bare wall outside the Metro in an indoor arcade at the top of the escalators was one of the finest classical musicians in the world, playing some of the most elegant music ever written on one of the most valuable violins ever made. His performance was arranged by The Washington Post as an experiment in context, perception and priorities -- as well as an unblinking assessment of public taste: In a banal setting at an inconvenient time, would beauty transcend?

So, what do you think happened?

A onetime child prodigy, at 39 Joshua Bell has arrived as an internationally acclaimed virtuoso. Three days before he appeared at the Metro station, Bell had filled the house at Boston's stately Symphony Hall, where merely pretty good seats went for \$100. Two weeks later, at the Music Center at Strathmore, in North Bethesda, he would play to a standing-room-only audience so respectful of his artistry that they stifled their coughs until the silence between movements. But on that Friday in January, Joshua Bell was just another mendicant, competing for the attention of busy people on their way to work.

Three minutes went by before *something* happened. Sixty-three people had already passed when, finally, there was a breakthrough of sorts. A middle-age man altered his gait for a split second, turning his head to notice that there seemed to be some guy playing music. Yes, the man kept walking, but it was something.

A half-minute later, Bell got his first donation. A woman threw in a buck and scooted off. It was not until six minutes into the performance that someone actually stood against a wall, and listened.

Things never got much better. In the three-quarters of an hour that Joshua Bell played, seven people stopped what they were doing to hang around and take in the performance, at least for a minute. Twenty-seven gave money, most of them on the run -- for a total of \$32 and change. That leaves the 1,070 people who hurried by, oblivious, many only three feet away, few even turning to look.

"At the beginning," Bell says, "I was just concentrating on playing the music. I wasn't really watching what was happening around me . . ."

"It was a strange feeling, that people were actually, ah . . ." The word doesn't come easily. "

.. *ignoring me.*”

As it happens, exactly one person recognized Bell, and she didn't arrive until near the very end. For Stacy Furukawa, a demographer at the Commerce Department, there was no doubt. She doesn't know much about classical music, but she had been in the audience three weeks earlier, at Bell's free concert at the Library of Congress. And here he was, the international virtuoso, sawing away, begging for money. She had no idea what the heck was going on, but whatever it was, she wasn't about to miss it.

Furukawa positioned herself 10 feet away from Bell, front row, center. She had a huge grin on her face. The grin, and Furukawa, remained planted in that spot until the end.

“It was the most astonishing thing I've ever seen in Washington,” Furukawa says. “Joshua Bell was standing there playing at rush hour, and people were not stopping, and not even looking, and some were flipping quarters at him! Quarters! I wouldn't do that to anybody. I was thinking, *Omigosh, what kind of a city do I live in that this could happen?*”

When it was over, Furukawa introduced herself to Bell, and tossed in a twenty. Not counting that -- it was tainted by recognition -- the final haul for his 43 minutes of playing was \$32.17. Yes, some people gave pennies.

“Actually,” Bell said with a laugh, “that's not so bad, considering. That's 40 bucks an hour. I could make an okay living doing this, and I wouldn't have to pay an agent.”

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- *Why do you think none of the passersby could hear the music for what it was?*
- *Can you think of a time when failure to take a closer look made you miss out on something important or on a great opportunity?*



### Shemos 2:11-12

Now it came to pass in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brothers **and looked at their burdens, and he saw** an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man of his brothers.

יָא וַיְהִי | בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל  
אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מִכָּה  
אִישׁ עִבְרִי מֵאֶחָיו:

**He turned this way and that way, and he**

יָב וַיִּפֶּן כֹּה וְכֹה וַיֵּרָא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ וַיִּךְ אֶת

<p><b>saw that there was no man;</b> so he struck the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.</p>	<p>הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַחֹל:</p>
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Moshe would have been one of the few passersby to stop and give world-renowned Bell the attention he deserved. He was a person who stopped and looked. He looked for deeper meaning, even when faced with a burning bush that appeared initially a mere phenomenon of nature. Only a deeper look could reveal the Godly presence in his midst. Furthermore, he was one to notice the people around him, to pay attention to their needs and well-being.

<h3 style="text-align: center;">Shabbos 21b</h3>	
<p>...Our Sages taught: The Chanukah candle - it is a mitzvah to place it at the door of one's house, on the outside, and if one is living in an attic, place it in a window facing the public area. And in times of danger, one may place it on his/her table, and that is sufficient...</p>	<p>... ת"ר נר חנוכה - מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו, מבחוץ, אם היה דר בעלייה מניחה בחלון הסמוכה לרה"ר, ובשעת הסכנה מניחה על שלחנו ודיו...</p>



**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- *Why must the Chanukah menorah be placed outside of the house or in a window?*
- *Why is pirsumei nisah, publicizing the miracle, such an essential part of the Chanukah light?*

<h3 style="text-align: center;">R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi</h3>	
<p>A little bit of light dispels a lot of darkness</p>	<p>מעט מן האור דוחה הרבה מן החשך</p>

When we light the Chanukah candles in a public place, we invite others to see what is right in front of them, but what they fail to notice on their own. Light does not show something new, but rather allows one to see what really has been present all along. The winter months can feel cold and dark. It's been months since the spiritual high of mitzvah-packed Tishrei and one easily can feel God has stepped away from the world, away from our lives. Spark those Chanukah candles for you and for all to see. Allow yourself to look for God all around you, to see the people in your life who need you – ignite your inner light.