

Lighting the Night

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Chanukah always begins on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev. We light the menorah to celebrate the triumph of the eternal flame of Torah over the forces of spiritual darkness and materialism. One day's worth of oil burned for eight days, defying nature, just like the survival of the Jewish people defies reason. As Mark Twain famously pointed out, the Greeks are long gone along with the rest of the great powers of antiquity (except China and India, I guess), yet the Jewish people endure.

Reb Nosson points out that one of the secrets of Jewish survival is the holiday of Chanukah itself. Chanukah is a holiday also celebrated during the mundane week—it's not a time when labor is forbidden, like Shabbat or the festivals. In lighting the menorah, we channel the light of the Temple into every Jewish home. This extraordinary mitzvah fills every Jewish home with holiness, and that light illuminates our way and protects us for the coming year.

Cherished Creator, please help me ignite the spiritual light of Chanukah. Grant the Jewish people a sweet, good year. Protect us in the merit of fulfilling this precious mitzvah.