



Message From Cantor Joshua Shron

"Let the light of Chanukah illuminate the darkness."

No doubt you've heard some variation of that metaphor in the past. It's the perfect feel-good message for this holiday season, one on which "light" plays a central role. Heck, I feel like I've used it myself in the pages of *Temple Talk* over the years. An overused expression? Absolutely. But with so much evil in the world, it just makes sense to look at the Chanukah candles as symbols of goodness and hope.

So please forgive me as I perpetuate the cliché.

What choice do I have? As I write this, the news has been filled with one unspeakable tragedy after another. Last week, an Israeli father and son were murdered by Palestinian terrorists. Later that evening, ISIS terrorists murdered 130 people in multiple attacks. In the days that followed, ISIS threatened attacks in New York City and Washington, DC. On November 20, five Israelis were killed in two separate terror attacks. We later learned that one of the victims was 18-year old Ezra Schwartz of Sharon, Massachusetts - an active USYer and (on a personal note) the nephew of our family friend.

On November 22, another victim. On November 23, yet another. Dear God, when will it end??

For the past several weeks, about 15 synagogue members have been joining me on Wednesday evenings to learn about and discuss Israel advocacy. While the discussions we've had have been engaging, vibrant and passionate, each meeting has left many of us feeling depressed and frustrated. Why? Because we all possess such a passion for the state of Israel, and we feel paralyzed by the fact that we see little light at the end of the tunnel. From international condemnation of Israel to Palestinian incitement to campus anti-Semitism, the situation seems to be going from bad to worse...with no end in sight.

Okay, so we've certainly covered the "darkness" part. Where in the world is the metaphorical "light"?

Ah, that's the beauty of Chanukah. From a spiritual perspective, the holiday is all about unlikely victories and the importance of never giving up hope. The Maccabees faced an extremely dark time in Jewish history, yet ultimately prevailed against their enemies and restored glory to the land of Israel. Our history has proven time after time that we will always come out on top, even in the darkest of circumstances and the most dire situations. Put simply, WE WILL WIN.

Too abstract for you? Well, how about this: Even in the darkest of times, there is so much light around us. The everyday beauty of nature. The smiling faces of our children and grandchildren. The embrace of caring friends and community members. The generosity of those who selflessly offer their time, money or kindness. The joy of family get-togethers over the holiday, as we gather with loved ones to kindle the Chanukah candles each night. The comforts of freshly-made potato latkes and jelly doughnuts. The fun of a heated game of dreidel, with pennies, almonds or M&Ms as prizes.

Smiling yet? Yeah, Chanukah tends to have that effect on people.

The light is there...we just need to let it in. This Chanukah, let's do our best to stop and appreciate the blessings we enjoy each and every day. Let's pay more attention to the light and do our best to shut out the darkness.

Don't worry...we'll get back to solving the world's problems on December 15th.

Cantor Josh Shron



Teen Conversations with The Cantor at Starbucks in Little Neck

**Tuesdays, 12/8 & 12/22
At 8:00 p.m.**