

presents:

Shabbos Inspire

Project Inspire is a grassroots movement inspiring the Jewish people to share the beauty and relevance of our heritage with our fellow Jews

Dvar Torah

The Eight Neshamas Of Chanukah

There are countless Torah volumes dedicated to Chanukah, its deep meaning and ramifications. One question I have never seen addressed is the following: We know that Hashem runs the world through Midah Kneged Midah, (the way one acts is the way Hashem reacts). Why, then, was the consequence of the Yidden going out to battle rewarded with the miracle of the oil? What is the intrinsic connection between their actions and a miraculous flame?

To answer the question, we must understand the circumstances of the time. It was a tragic period, one in which our nation had never before experienced. We were infused with foreign morals. A new set of values began to prevail in the hearts and minds of the precious Klal Yisroel. Mitzvos and Torah learning were discarded and ignored. The Torah and the very fabric that we clutched onto to guide and unify us was being torn away. There were many casualties. An entire movement of Jewish sympathizers emerged amongst the people. Many put their hope into a false doctrine as they fell into the lure of the culture of the times.

You probably assume that I am referring to the Greek Empire and to the time of Chanukah. I am not. I am referring to our culture and the state of Klal Yisroel today. "בימים ההם בזמן הזה" "Bayamim hahem bazman hazeh" - In those days as in our time.

The inexperienced and courageous Yidden took arms. With relentless determination they pursued the enemy. They fought for Mitzvos, for the Torah, and for G-d. They fought for their families and their future generations. They were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for the Jewish people. It was a time that called for Meseras Nefesh - the giving of one's Nefesh/soul for the cause. They rose to the challenge. I am now, referring to the time of Chanukah.

What happened to us? Where are our spears? Where is our commitment?

"נר ה' נשמת אדם" "Ner Hashem nishmas adam" - The flame of Hashem is the soul of man. I believe there is a reason why upon return from the battlefield, the Chashmonaim were rewarded with the Chanukah miracle. Simply, the Chashmonaim were willing to give their Neshama/flame away for the eternity of the Jewish people. In turn, they were rewarded with a miraculous flame.

That is what each light of Chanukah represents: the souls of the Jewish people. Klal Yisroel was reignited and would now rise on high in its service to its Father in heaven.

Continued on back

A Small Chanukah Miracle For A Lonely Jewish Soldier In Iraq

It was our first big celebration as a family since our son's Bris, eight years earlier. Our daughter Aliza was becoming Bas Mitzvah. We had a fun idea for how to celebrate it: We had been married years earlier on a boat in Manhattan, and since Aliza was born on our first anniversary, we thought we would do it again.

So we hired a boat and invited a small group of mostly relatives and classmates. In planning the food and the flowers and the music, there seemed to be something missing. We had the "bar," but where was the Mitzvah? Aside from my daughter's Dvar Torah, what could we do to elevate this gathering from being just another birthday party?

Providentially, there was a request in our Shul to Daven for a local soldier who was being deployed to Iraq. The idea was born; let's have all the kids at our Simcha make Chanukah cards to send to Jewish soldiers overseas. Nothing earth-shattering, just a way to inject some meaning into the festivities.

The date arrived and our ship sailed. G-d granted us a picture perfect September day and when Aliza's carefully prepared speech blew overboard, she adlibbed admirably. The Chanukah cards were written and coloured and decorated. A lovely time was had by all. And the next day, the cards were mailed out with heartfelt wishes and love to our Jewish brothers and sisters. End of story.

Or so we thought.

Six months later, when the Bas Mitzvah was a fond, distant memory, there was a knock on my door in the middle of the day. Bravely, I unlocked the door, even though I didn't recognize the voice on the other side. A pleasant twenty-something man greeted me:

"I'm Lieutenant Steinberg, and your daughter sent me a Chanukah card when I was in Iraq."

Well, you could've blown me over with a feather.

But wait – it gets better.

Apparently our few dozen cards had been thrown in with the hundreds and thousands of cards sent to celebrate that other December holiday. The chaplain showed up one day at the army base with an enormous sack, filled to the brim with cards and letters. As he passed out handfuls of cards to the grateful troops, Lt. Steinberg was hanging back, feeling pretty left out and lonely.

Continued on back

The Eight Neshamas Of Chanukah continued...

Why eight flames?

Project Inspire is a grassroots movement to encourage and empower every observant Jew to reach out. We are all given countless opportunities to have a monumental effect on a fellow Jew. It may be a neighbour, coworker or relative. Without everyone's participation, we will not make a dent in preventing the tremendous tide of assimilation.

Statistically it has been calculated that if every Frum Jew would reach out to just eight unaffiliated Jews, we would have assimilation licked! Eight ... could the message for us on this Chanukah be any clearer?

The word for eight is שמונה/Shemonah. The Mekubalim explain that it is the same letters as נשמה/Nishama.

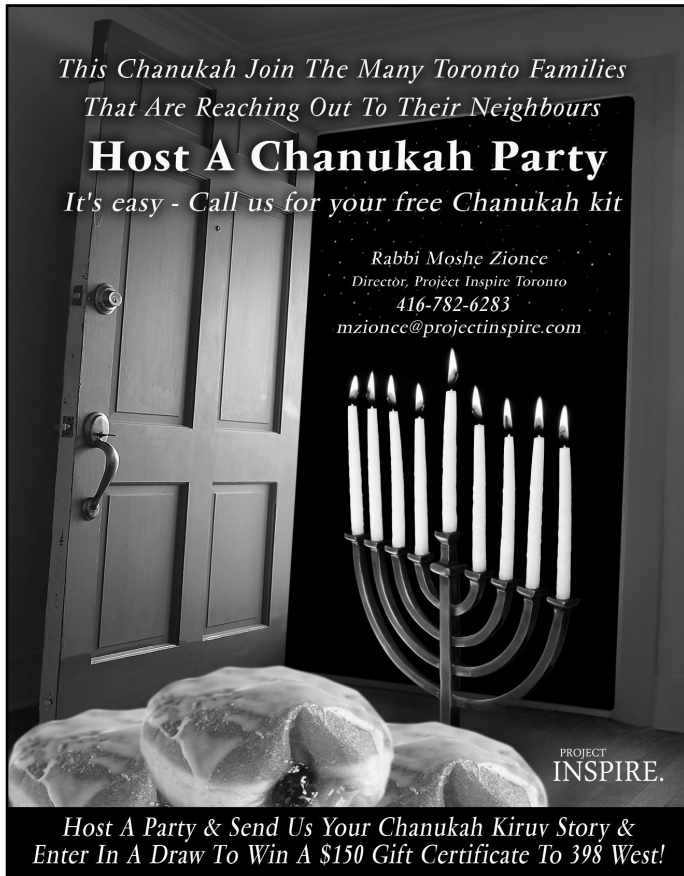
Today we are not asking for Meseras Nefesh. For generations, we have lit the Menorah with care and love. A seemingly small gesture, but one that has ignited the bitter, dark exile. Like a flame, when one reaches out and touches another, nothing is lost. It only takes a little love, a little warmth.

The Bnai Yissaschar explains that hidden in the flames of Chanukah is the light of Moshiach. Now, is it any wonder that igniting these flames will usher in the time of our redemption?

"בימים ההם בזמן הזה" "Bayamim hahem bazman hazeh" - In those days as in our time. May we all have the fortitude to go a bit beyond our comfort zone and reach out this Chanukah. Through the wonderful Mitzvah of Kiruv, may we all experience great light in our own lives, as well as the lives of our families and all of Klal Yisroel.

Good Shabbos and Ah Lichteigin Chanukah,
Moshe Zionce

Please forward all comments to Rabbi Zionce
mzionce@projectinspire.com • 416-782-6283



*This Chanukah Join The Many Toronto Families
That Are Reaching Out To Their Neighbours*

Host A Chanukah Party

It's easy - Call us for your free Chanukah kit

Rabbi Moshe Zionce
Director, Project Inspire Toronto
416-782-6283
mzionce@projectinspire.com

PROJECT
INSPIRE.

Host A Party & Send Us Your Chanukah Kiruv Story &
Enter In A Draw To Win A \$150 Gift Certificate To 398 West!

A Small Chanukah Miracle continued...

Suddenly amidst the celebratory crowd, the company captain noticed our soldier. "Steinberg, why are you so quiet? How come you're not opening any cards?"

Oh brother, Steinberg thought, don't they get it? "Captain, I'm Jewish, remember?"

"C'mon, Steinberg, don't be a spoilsport. Take a card."

Steinberg tried to shrink himself into invisibility. But the captain wasn't having it. "Let's go, Steinberg. These people were nice enough to write to us. NOW TAKE A CARD!"

By now the captain had everyone's attention and Steinberg was getting pretty uncomfortable in the spotlight. Quick, he told himself, just grab a card and you'll stop being the centre of attention.

Steinberg reached deep into the sack, pulled out a card and looked at it. To his complete and utter shock the return address said Wesley Hills, New York. Steinberg is from Wesley Hills.

Hands shaking, he tore it open and found a beautiful hand-made Chanukah card, signed by my daughter Aliza, the Bas Mitzvah girl herself. Steinberg was dumbfounded by the providence of it all. He broke out in a huge grin and proudly showed the card to the captain and the entire platoon. Everyone understood the small miracle they had just witnessed.

Standing there in my Wesley Hills home, with my mouth gaping open and tears in my eyes, I begged Steinberg to come back and retell the story when my children were home. Indeed, he returned the following week with a friend and a camera. For our family, it was an incredible inspiration to see so clearly the power of our "little" Mitzvah.

But that's not the end of the story. Just this past September one of the chaplains I had contacted about sending those cards asked if I could help arrange kosher meals and snacks for troops in Afghanistan for the High Holidays and Succos. I organized some people in my community and we sent 144 kosher meals to Afghanistan. Project Inspire got involved and sent dozens of personal cards and honey sticks for Rosh Hashanah and then chocolates for Chanukah to troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, Italy and Kuwait.

The story of Lt. Steinberg continues to bear more and more fruit. May all my daughter's mitzvos enjoy such success!

(The story is true; Lt. Steinberg's name has been changed.)

Cultivate a relationship by giving a beautiful Chanukah gift of chocolates and an inspiring card to a unaffiliated Jew in your life
Cost \$3.00. Contact Rachelli at 416-782-3579 or 416-997-4613
rachelli@projectinspire.com



The Innovative Home Kiruv Training Seminar

Experience this educational and entertaining 2 evening seminar from the comfort of your home! Ask us how.