

THE CANDLE AND THE SOUL

by Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf

*"For God's candle
is the soul of Man." (Proverbs)*

The flames of the menorah are small and silent.

On the first night of Chanukah we light one candle, one flame. Small and silent. We walk into the room and we barely notice its presence. It's there but it's very subtle. Like our souls, the flame is there. But it is very, very subtle.

As we hurtle through a thousand things that fill our days with noise and confusion and countless loose ends, it's very easy to lose track of our souls. There's just too much going on. There are family obligations, kids, school, the office, dating, vacations, the six o'clock news, the fortunes of our favorite teams, making dinner, reading our E-mail, getting the car fixed, returning overdue books, returning calls, paying the bills and surfing the Web. And amidst all of this we're supposed to remember that each of us has a soul? That deep down there is an inner essence that also wants and needs a bit of attention? That there is a part of us that wants to do more than tasks and errands; that longs to touch a bit of the infinite, the luminous, the precious and the divine in our lives?

But how?

The answer is by taking one small spiritual step at a time.

The answer can be found in lighting the Chanukah menorah. Each night of lighting is an opportunity to nurture our souls by introducing an element of inspiration into our lives. The flames we light on the menorah possess the ability to resonate with our own inner flames - to kindle and fan the flames of our souls.

We know that life makes all sorts of demands on us, but deep down, we all sense that there are certain intangibles that represent the essence, the soul of our lives. The lighting of the menorah creates a new space in our lives. A space where we can, for a while, divest ourselves of everything else that tugs at us and focus on the "deep down" of life. Who we truly are deep down. Who we want to be - deep down. What we want to do with this brief time we call life, what we want to stand for, and what we want to do - deep down.

YOUR INNER FLAME

Here is one approach to accessing your inner flame.

Each night of Chanukah, take some time to reflect on one of the following issues. You may find it especially helpful to create a Chanukah journal to record your thoughts and reflections.

- 1) "Deep down, what I truly want is...
- 2) "I feel most in touch with my soul when...
- 3) "What can I do tomorrow that will in some way express the deepest part of who I am?"
- 4) "If I could give myself just one piece of advice for keeping in touch with my deepest aspirations, what would I say?"
- 5) "If I could give my spouse, child or best friend just one tip for not losing sight of the most important things in life, what would I say?"

The aim of this period of reflection is to get in touch with what you truly want; what about your inner self you deem to be precious; and what you long for, deep down.

Each night of Chanukah try to ponder these "deep-down" issues and questions. Ask yourself a question and then just sit quietly in front of the silent glow of your menorah and listen for the soft sound of your own inner flame. It may take a few minutes or even longer, but be patient and wait for the answer to come. When it does, write down your answer. After the first night you will have one answer. The second night you'll have two. And by the last night of Chanukah, both the menorah in your home - and the flame deep within your soul - will be glowing a little more brightly.

Excerpted with permission from the book
"CHANUKAH - EIGHT NIGHTS OF LIGHT, EIGHT GIFTS FOR THE SOUL"
by Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf

Published by Leviathan Press, Baltimore, MD

Phone: 410-653-0300, 800-538-4284

Other books by Shimon Apisdorf, available online at [The Jewish Literacy Foundation](#).

Presented in cooperation with Heritage House, Jerusalem.
Visit www.innernet.org.il.