

# GROWING FOREVER

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

The Mitzvah of Chanuka is: A candle for each man and his household! (Shabbos 21B)

How many candles should you light? On the first night light one. From there on continue to add on one more on each night until the final night, there should be eight... (Shulchan Aruch 671:2)

What should we be thinking about while observing night after night, how that single light grows gradually into a Menorah in full bloom in our windows? A few clues! 1) Chanuka the word "chanuka" means chinuch- education and also implies inauguration or initiation. 2) The Mitzvah of Chanuka has a strong publicity component but it is anchored in the home! 3) The number eight, according to the Maharal and others has the symbolic value of reaching beyond the realm of this world which was organized in seven. 4) King Solomon gives another hint, "A candle is a Mitzvah and Torah is light! (Mishlei)! All together now!

My wife and I were strolling one Sunday in our rather modest block and we noticed that the neighbors around the corner had made extraordinary changes in the appearance of their house. There was this lovely bay window filled with ornaments and a Chinese garden with lollipop trees and a well manicured lawn that the husband was cutting with mustache scissors.

My wife asked his wife who was standing out front surveying the progress, "Arlene, lovely improvements! What inspired all this?" She answered shyly, "Well, actually I just needed to replace two broken tiles in the bathroom." She paused there and glared at us as if to say, "Don't you get it?" We stared back at her curiously. So she continued..

"We couldn't find the exact matching color so we redid all of them. Then the wallpaper looked ugly and old in contrast so we did that too. The medicine cabinet seemed decrepit in comparison and so we replaced it. The bathroom became the nicest room in the house but when we walked out into the hallway the rug looked so shoddy that we decided to pull- it up and polish the floors.

Then the front window was a dull match for the shiny new floors. We decided to go deep pocket and install bay windows. When we looked out from the bay windows we noticed how unkempt the lawn had become so we called a Guido the gardener and he created this lovely designer garden!"

I have dangerous hobby. Don't you kids at home try this! I like to read bumper-stickers! Some of

them boil my blood, a few make me chuckle, and once in a while I catch a glance at one that even agree with strongly. I don't get it when I see on one side the phrase, "Pro-Choice" which promotes abortion and the other side of the same car, "Imagine World Peace!" What are thinking?! Then I saw one that states, rather sardonically, "Maybe the Hokey Pokey really is what it's all about!"

Finally, the one that resonates as an almost universal maxim, "Think Global! Act Local!" Maybe that's what it's all about. That's how we can achieve world peace.

It begins with a real soulful change, an improvement, an action of any size, from deep within. Then it continues to go from in to outward until it is more noticeable even from the outside. So is the nature of Mitzvos. They are doable deeds that lead to **a designer garden**.

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