

12/02/15

Kindling small flames in our darkening skies

[View this email in your browser](#)

Appreciating Our Unique Lights

Yair Silverman '91 | Bronfman Torah | Parshat Vayeshev/ Chanuka 2015

Rabbi Yair Silverman ('91) is the co-founder and director of [Moed](#), which fosters a renaissance of engagement for both secular and religious Jews living our shared identity in Israel. Moed's activities promote a Judaism that is guided by Torah, animated by our diversity. Yair is married to Ilana Fodiman, and is blessed with four amazing children. He lives in Zichron Yackov.

While Chanuka is often referred to as the holiday of lights, we turn off our fantastic LED fixtures in the darkest season of the year to kindle small candles and appreciate and share each one's 360 degree impact.

The Chanuka tale begins with an eye on a small family of Matityahu from a small town who witness the deterioration of Jewish life. Against all odds, this individual family rises up and takes on the robust Assyrian Greek army and manages to defeat it and its overbearing culture...But that's not all! When the priests return to the ransacked Temple in Jerusalem, they courageously light the Temple's menorah with the residual bit of purified oil that was found. Both of these central elements of the Chanuka narrative highlight the capacity of the few in the face of the many.

12/02/15

Our sages sanctify these events by establishing a holiday for future generations. The established ritual of lighting the chanukia on the eight-day-long festival asks that we light one small light on each night adding a new small glow to the previous night's flame. The focus upon these individual lights finds shape in the legal stipulations of the Chanukia; providing ample space between flames to appreciate each individual gesture, to arrange them in a straight line rather than a circle so their individuality is not lost and appear as a מדורה -- a singular torch. Each individual expression of light is to be granted space, oxygen and perspective to shine distinctly.

The ritual of lighting not only requires us to open ourselves up and kindle these lights, but also to communicate. We take the light and place it at our doorposts and windows and share it with the world. In fact, ideally the lights are to burn תשקע החמה לעד שתכלה הרגל מן השוק מש, from sunset until the last of the people leave the market. These details of placement, help us develop a sensitivity to share ourselves and our light beyond our walls and as long as someone is out there walking around in the darkness, we are asked to share our light.

The randomness of the heightened reign of terror over the last months in Israel, has left us to mourn and appreciate the individual lights that each victim shone into the world. His/her role in her family, workplace, community. Each with individual passions, skills, interests. Each with a unique light to share. Extinguished. As a nation we respond by chasing this darkness and magnifying the individuality and infinite worth of each human being and sharing their unique lights with the world.

On Chanuka we open up our hearts and minds with a very personal and individual appreciation of each light on the chanukia. The darkening sky that surrounds us is lit by a cluster of small unique acts, each one given space and opportunity to express itself and shine with all of its unique potential. It is this appreciation of our individual small lights that our 8 day holiday of light transforms into a 2000 year old celebration.

12/02/15



Copyright © 2015 BYFI, All rights reserved.

You are connected to the Bronfman Youth Fellowships

Our mailing address is:

418 Broadway, 2nd Floor
Albany, NY 12207

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)