

Weekly Teaching

December 21, 2018

Traditionally, the Jew each morning is to recite the blessing:

*“Praised are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who in His mercy gives **light** to the Earth and to all those that dwell upon it, and Who, in God’s goodness renews creation each and every day.”*

Recently, we concluded our Festival of Light with our observance of Chanukah.

This week, our Christian brothers and sisters will observe their own Festival of Light with their holiday of Christmas.

Both Jew and Christian associates light with faith.

In the Torah, we read of God’s presence within the “burning bush”, the “pillars of fire”, the “bright clouds”.

The Psalmist declared for us that “God is our light and our salvation”.

And the prophet Isaiah tells us that “God will be our light forever”, and “the glory of God will shine upon us”.

Christian texts routinely align “God’s light” as being synonymous with Jesus.

For the Christian, the form of theological belief is different, but the overall faith belief is the same.

Last week I attended a church service celebrating Israel and had the opportunity to preach at the end of the service.

I was again struck by that which is similar vs. that which is different.

Both Jew and Christian perceive within their own special prescription of faith the same Divine Presence within our lives; each wants to bring more of God’s light into the world.

Waking up in a dark room we are initially disoriented. But as soon as a little light appears we immediately are able to effectively address our surroundings, and move forward to our desired destination with a restored confidence of being able to see.

Light helps us to see.

If we open up our hearts, minds and souls to faith, we are able to navigate more effectively within the rooms of our daily lives; we can move forward to our desired destination with a restored confidence.

Light helps us grow and live. Light brings us comfort.

Light dispels the darkness in what can otherwise seem too much of a dark world.

When we lit our Chanukah Menorah, we lit first our *shamash* (servant) light, and with that candle lit all of the other candles.

No blessing was said until the action was occurring with the other candles.

We are to be like that *shamash* candle; to be the servant that only makes blessings come when we actively share God’s light with others.

When the Christian observes their particularistic rituals of light, they are practicing the same universal value; wanting to be *shamash* within God's world.

The morning prayer isn't said from a passive theological stance; rather, we are reminding ourselves each and every morning that TODAY I am to help bring God's light to the Earth and to everyone who shares the world with me.

This Friday night is the winter solstice—the darkest day of the year.

Make a point to light your Shabbat candles, and in kindling the light, know yet another ritual reminder that we are to be an *Ohr Hadash*; a New Light by which we can help bring more of God's loving presence within our too often dark world.

Ohr Hadash al tzion ta-ir... May a new light shine upon Zion, and may we all be worthy to delight in its splendor.

Shabbat Shalom, and to our Christian friends and family, a very Merry Christmas!

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