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What is so special about Chanukah light?

King Solomon wrote "Everything is vanity and nothing is new under the sun." When the King wrote those words he was talking about what it is like to see the world in the light of the sun, or in the light of nature. In the Zohar, the chief work of the Kabbalah, and which itself means "brightness" or "brilliance," we read that "everything is new when seen in the light beyond the sun."

The Zohar goes on to say that the light of Chanukah is the light beyond the sun, the light beyond nature, the light of miracles.

So, shining our Chanukah light on the world, we see the world in terms of miracles. For eight days, our sages tell us, we fill our eyes with the light of Chanukah so that when the festival is over we are better able to see the miracles in our own lives.

Years ago the CCAR offered a perspective on Chanukah that applies today. In "*Hanerot Halalu – These Lights Are Holy*," Rabbi Corey Weiss and others include ideas for a home celebration that give special meaning to each of the eight candles:

First Candle – Freedom - We remember the dedication and courage of the Maccabees. We give thanks for freedom and rededicate ourselves to the ideals of justice.

Second Candle – Knowledge - We give thanks for the gift of Torah and the opportunity to study. We rededicate ourselves to the deepening of our understanding of our heritage.

Third Candle – Good Deeds - We recall our heritage that asks that we remember that we were once strangers in the land of Egypt. We rededicate ourselves to helping the poor and the neglected.

Fourth Candle – Community - We remember that we are a part of a larger family of humankind and we rededicate ourselves to uphold the dignity of all people.

Fifth Candle – Land - We take pride in the accomplishments of the pioneers and builders of the state of Israel and we rededicate ourselves to support their efforts to create a garden in the desert.

Sixth Night – Hope - We call to mind the yearnings of our brothers and sisters who still live under oppression. We rededicate ourselves to keep the flame of their aspirations alive.

Seventh Candle – Family - We give thanks for the precious gift of loved ones who share our joys and sorrows. We gather to rededicate ourselves to strengthening the bonds that draw us to one another.

Eighth Candle – Peace - We are mindful that, like Jews in every age, we live in a troubled world that cries out for harmony. We rededicate ourselves to the responsibility of securing shalom for all.

It was Albert Einstein who said, "*There are two ways of looking at the world; either you see nothing as a miracle or you see everything as a miracle.*"

Read on.

Enjoy and then apply the miracles your IFR colleagues have made in the lives of others. Chag Chanukah Sameach!

IFR Mission Statement

The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education. IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.

IFR News Editors

Rabbi Barbara Aiello and Rabbi Frank Tamburello

Layout/design: shosh



The Greater Waco (TX) Interfaith Conference featured a Chanukah program that involved clergy and congregants from twelve faith communities. Called "Lighting the Path to Understanding," the program emphasized the lights of the season and included the eight candles of the Chanukah menorah as well as the four candles of the



Christian Advent Wreath. Muslims participated as well members of nine different Christian communities.

A highlight of the evening were the "interfaith deserts," sweets that each group brought, explained and shared with others. **IFR member Rabbi Gordon Fuller** (Congregation Agudath Jacob, Waco, TX) organized not only the Chanukah interfaith event but an annual spring festival, "Festival of Faiths." The cultural exposition includes representatives from the Bahai, Hindu, Muslim, Unitarian, Christian and Jewish communities and participants enjoy traditional foods and (led by Rabbi Fuller) Israeli dancing!

IFR member Rabbi Maggid Dov (Bruce) Forman of Ft. Lauderdale (FL) serves his community as an ordained maggid, a traditional storyteller and spiritual teacher. Rabbi Forman is well-known in the community for his ability to make Jewish tradition come alive through the art of story telling. From his friend Rabbi Sam Intrator, Rabbi Forman shares the following Chassidic tale – a tale of a miracle:

This is a story about the Heiliger Rebbe, Aaron Karliner, who lived about a hundred years after the Baal Shem Tov. In the town of Karlin, near Pinsk in Russia, it's widely known that when you daven (i.e., pray) you scream at the top of your lungs. Reb Asher, Reb Aaron's son, once asked his father, "If I scream when I daven as loud as if I've been stabbed, G-d forbid, is that loud enough? He answered him, "Yes, that's okay for the beginning of the davenen. Start from there and get louder as you go along."

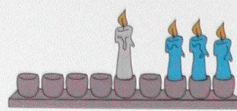
Once late on a summer afternoon, the holy Karliner rebbe told his Chasidim (followers), "Prepare the horses. We have to travel for Mincha (the afternoon prayers). When they got going, it was already late. They arrived well after dark at a little shtetl (ghetto) and the Chasidim couldn't restrain themselves, "Rebbe, it's so late already. When are we going to daven?" So the Karliner answered the Chasidim, "Okay. At the end of the village there is a little inn. We'll go daven there." They go and knock on the door. An old, old, old man opens the door. He looks to be maybe 120. The Chasidim tell the old man that they have come with their Rebbe to daven the afternoon prayers. So he lets them in.

Could you imagine, considering how long they were waiting to daven, how especially loud the Chasidim screamed their prayers on that night. And if that were not enough it was such a hot summer night, so all the windows were open. So the neighbors, hearing the screaming coming from the house, figured there must be a fire. And everybody in a shtetl knows, with all the houses made of wood and so close to each other, if one house catches fire, then the whole shtetl burns down. Mamesh! (really). So the whole town gets up

and brings buckets of water to the house. Of course when they get there, they see a different sort of fire than what they expected. They see holy fire.

The townspeople got caught up in the excitement, and they too, were screaming prayers at the top of their lungs. It was davenen like not to be believed, like never before and never after. The cries of all reached until high heaven. After the davenen was finally over, the townspeople went to their homes and came back with all kinds of fruits. They had a great feast, and the Heiliger Karliner blessed everyone. As the day broke, the townspeople all went home. The Rebbe and the Chasidim prepared their wagons to leave. The Rebbe was already sitting in his coach and motioned over the old inn keeper for a final goodbye. That's when the old man began to speak. He said, "This inn belonged to my father and his father before him. I am 107 years old today. When I was seven, one hundred years ago, the Holy Baal Shem Tov (founder of the Chasidic movement) came to this inn. He came late at night, just as you came. He prayed loudly the way you prayed. And all the people of the town ran toward them just as they did today.

They all poured out their hearts to the Holy One, Blessed Be He. The townspeople all came back with fruits and we had a great feast. When it was finally all over, the Baal Shem Tov blessed everyone. It was all just like tonight. The Baal Shem Tov got into his carriage, and just as he was about to leave, he called me over. He placed his holy hand on my head and said to me, I want you to remember this night and remember what I am saying to you now. One hundred years from now, there will be prayers and a feast in this place, just as there was tonight. So please tell the people who come then, that I was here."



Rabbi Bill Kurry shares the miracle of diversity when he writes, "I am a new member of IFR and ordained only 5 months ago. Since that time I have booked a dozen weddings, a funeral

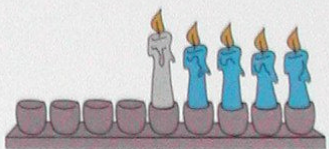
and a baby naming. It is absolutely unbelievable how much need there is for Rabbis with Jewish/interfaith sensitivity, support and accommodation. I am not a young man and have been very much involved in Jewish synagogues and the Jewish community for almost 50 years.

Not long ago Rabbi Kurry received a call from a woman who was married to an ultra-orthodox man. She and he husband were the parents of five children and the family had spent their life within this very insular community. The woman revealed to Rabbi Kurry that she was gay, but that she had worked hard to bury this aspect of herself deep within.

When she finally opened up and revealed this, many with whom she spoke were horrified at the revelation. They suggested a range of "cures," including psychological help and hormone injections. Eventually she and her husband were ostracized from the community.

Following her traditional divorce ("get"), she fell in love. Rabbi Kurry reports that he was honored to officiate at her civil union ceremony.

When this lovely lady asked, "What kind of Rabbi are you?" He replied, "one who loves everyone with no conditions." She said with a smile, "Oh, then you're a renegade Rabbi!" Rabbi Kurry, who wears the honor proudly, reports that it was a wonderful, miraculous moment for the couple and for him as well.



Seniors in Assisted Living Make Chanukah Cards for Jewish troops in Iraq and Afghanistan

On Tuesday, November 10, **IFR member Rabbi Barbara Aiello** worked with residents in Anchin Pavilion, Sarasota's (FL) only Jewish Assisted Living Facility as they marshaled their artistic talents to create Chanukah greeting cards for Jewish soldiers stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The program is part of **The Rabbi's Mitzvah Club** community service projects, devised by Rabbi Barbara, who works with Jewish seniors, some of whom are 100 years old or more, to reach out into the community and do for others.

"The Hebrew word, "mitzvah" literally means "commandment" and we Jews are commanded to do good deeds," said Rabbi Barbara, who has organized the group to make hand puppets and Passover seder plates for elementary school students, and dish gardens for the Tuttle Elementary School teachers to show appreciation for their hard work.

The November mitzvah program featured colorful Chanukah cards that will become part of a package sent to Project MOT, a national organization that supports our Jewish servicemen and women. Co-facilitators of Los Angeles based Project MOT, Joan Rimmon and Marsha Roseman contacted Rabbi Barbara who was only too happy to help.

Ms. Roseman reports, "We sent almost 100 holiday care packages to our deployed Jewish troops last year. All were well received and enjoyed by our brave heroes in their various parts of the world",

IFR Rabbis Rifuah Shlema

Rabbi Raphael Pazo

Valerie Allen (wife of Rabbi Dick Allen)



IFR member Rabbi Roger Ross (NYC) travels the globe to encourage communities to develop interfaith education projects. What follows are excerpts from the rabbi's "Call to Understanding – The need for Interfaith education":

Throughout the ages, it has been said that many of the most horrific wars have been fought in the name of God. People who lead their countries to war do it for power, possessions, and wealth, but the "common" people are convinced that it is a war of one faith against another. If only there was a way to teach the truth is that there is only one God and that we are all children of that God.

The call to war has usually included the words, "God is on our side," and that statement has been used to justify killing or enslaving anyone who prays differently or follows a different path. The horrible events that have happened in the recent past have been perpetrated in the name of religion and one faith versus another. The wars in Africa, the World Trade Center attack, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, the terror in Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Chechnya and everywhere else in the world have usually been labeled a "Holy War" and include some form of ethnic cleansing that follows religious lines.

Interfaith education is the way to teach the truth and end this damaging cycle. The process is simple, but the commitment is the challenge. Are we ready to do something different than we have in the past?

The value of interfaith education has become more and more apparent. After the tragedy of September 11th, 2001, the greatest presence among the volunteers and chaplains at Ground Zero were interfaith ministers and students. Before the work there was done, every chaplain, be they Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, or any other faith, had found the truth for themselves and were acting as Interfaith clergy so that they could support all the rescue workers and families with respect and knowledge of the faiths and traditions of those they were helping.

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The most important part of an interfaith education is the ability to really see and hear the truths of all the faiths, and how we all are living with the same precepts even if we define them with our own unique languages. In their book *Spiritual Literacy* (Touchstone Books, 1998), authors Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat teach a great lesson in, "seeing."

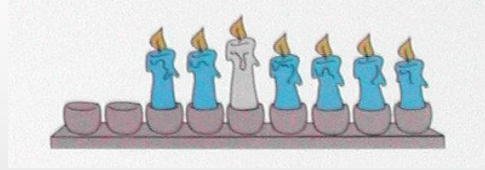
They tell about Oggie Rand. He manages a cigar store in Brooklyn. Oggie has an unusual habit - at precisely eight o'clock each morning, he photographs the front of the store from exactly the same spot. He collects his daily snapshots in photograph albums, each labeled by date. He calls his project his "life's work."

One day Oggie showed his albums to a friend. Flipping the pages of the albums, the man noticed in amazement that the pictures were all the same! Oggie watched him skim through the pictures and finally replied, "You'll never get it if you don't slow down, my friend. The pictures are all of the same spot, but each one is different from every other one. The differences are in the detail. In the way people's clothes change according to season and weather. In the way the light hits the street. Some days the corner is almost empty. Other times it is filled with people, bikes, cars and trucks. It's just one little part of the world, but things take place there, too, just like everywhere else."

This time Oggie's friend looked more carefully at each picture. No two were alike. He slowly became aware of how unique every moment is. Through a series of photographs, he became conscious of one of life's great truths -- that each minute that passes is special, even sacred!

If we learn, through interfaith education, to look and really see, we, too, will realize that each faith, and each human being who professes that faith, is a unique and sacred part of the whole scheme of existence. We will begin to remember that, beneath the words we have always heard before, the truth is there for us to see and learn.

So, how can each one of us begin to share the interfaith perspective that "All Is One?" We can teach our children not to fear, hate or judge out of hand. We can teach them that we are all one people, displayed in different colors, beliefs and cultures. We can teach tolerance. Judaism speaks about *Tikkun Olam*, the healing of the world. We can share those same concepts with willing friends and family and create a small *Tikkun Olam* within our own community. The path to that understanding is through interfaith education.



Rabbi Brenda Shoshanna (NYC) paints a masterpiece with words of peace and reflection when she shares about her revolutionary and creative combination Zen meditative practice with Jewish traditions.

As founder of The Mishkan, The Center for Jewish and Zen Practice, Rabbi Shoshanna explains that The Mishkan offers a unique combination of meditation, reflection and the practice of Jewish holiday traditions.

"For Chanukah we have offered a 3-5 day retreat that blends simple zazen sitting and chanting along with lectures and group sharing. The kindling of the Chanukah lights along with the zazen meditation allows Jews to bring light into their own hearts and to experience the meaning of the holiday in a beautiful context," Shoshanna says.

Rabbi Shoshanna emphasizes that Zazen meditation is not a religion but a practice that enhances spiritual development within any religion to which the practice is applied. For this reason, it can be a useful tool in deepening Jewish understanding.

The Miskhan center is dedicated to the enhancing the Jewish experience by adding Torah study, Hebrew chanting and kiddush to the basic Zen practice that forms the foundation of Rabbi Shoshanna's work.

Bruchim Ha'baim to new IFR members

Rabbi Torey Bowen

Rabbi Neil Brill

Rabbi Bill Kurry

Rabbi Leonard Sarko

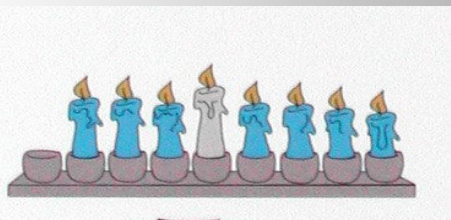
Rabbi Shai Specht

Rabbi Robert Teixeira

Rabbi Renae Lee Toben

Ravenous Ravens

Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish holiday Eats and Treats



Here is a somewhat healthy Chanukah treat inspired by that old fashioned bubbe, Martha Stewart...

Tasty Chanukah Gelt

1 lb. dried apricots
1 lb. bittersweet chocolate, chopped
aluminum foil, candy wrappers (optional)

1. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Heat chocolate over a double boiler. Allow the water in the boiler to get hot, but not fully boil. Use a plastic spatula to scrape away chocolate from the sides. Remove from the heat as soon as the chocolate is melted. You may use a microwave if you prefer. Melt the chocolate in a glass bowl in short intervals, stirring well with spatula.
3. Immediately add all the apricots to the melted chocolate. carefully lift each piece out of the pot with a fork allowing some of the excess chocolate to drip off. For a more sophisticated look, try holding each apricot by one end with your fingers and dripping only half of it into the chocolate.
4. Place carefully on parchment lined baking sheet. Refrigerate until the chocolate becomes firm about 20-30 minutes. You can also wrap each piece in foil to give as gifts. Store in refrigerator. If refrigerated they can last up to a week, though they are best if eaten within 3 days.



Chanukah Iced Cookies

Yield: 4 1/2 dozen

2 cups all purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 large egg
2 tablespoons brandy
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups powdered sugar
2 large egg whites
1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
blue food coloring assorted decorations (such as blue and white crystallized sugar; optional)

Sift first 3 ingredients into medium bowl. Using electric mixer, beat 1 cup sugar and butter in large bowl to blend. Add egg, brandy and vanilla. Beat until very smooth and light in color. Add dry ingredients and beat just until well blended. Shape dough into 3 disks. Wrap each in plastic and chill until firm enough to roll, at least 1 hour. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Let dough soften slightly at room temperature before rolling out.)

Preheat oven to 350 F. Butter 2 large baking sheets. Roll out 1 dough disk on lightly floured surface to 1/8-inch thickness. Cut out cookies with assorted cookie cutters and transfer to prepared sheets. Gather scraps; roll out dough and cut out more cookies. Transfer to sheets. Bake cookies until just beginning to color at edges, about 10 minutes. Let stand on sheet 5 minutes; transfer to rack. Cool cookies and cool baking sheets. Repeat with remaining 2 dough disks.

Whisk powdered sugar, egg whites and lemon juice in medium bowl until well blended. Spoon 1/4 of icing into small bowl; tint with blue food coloring. Spread white icing on cookies; decorate with blue icing and sprinkle with assorted decorations, if desired. Let stand until icing is firm and dry. (Can be prepared 3 days ahead. Store cookies at room temperature in single layers between sheets of waxed paper in airtight containers.)

Mark your calendars!

2010 Study Kallah Delray Beach Florida

March 16-18 2010



The IFR is planning to host an IFR Study Kallah in March 2010.

If any of you would like a teaching slot please let me know as soon as possible. .

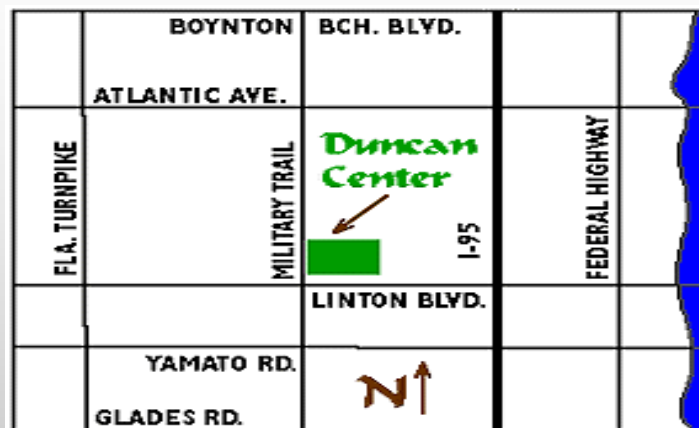
Kallah instructors will be given a reduction off the standard fee schedule.

Private room and bathroom (all meals) \$275.00 per person for 2 nights. Commuter rate is 145.00 per person. (includes all meals)

The Study Kallah begins Tuesday March 16 and ends Thursday March 18 2010 at the Duncan Center in Delray Beach Florida.

This study Kallah is open to *non* IFR members as well.

Email shosh: rabbis@bellsouth.net



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DECEMBER 15 2009

