

## **RABBI'S MESSAGE**

### **Bringing Light to a S.A.D. Time**

The early mornings and late afternoons the past few weeks have reminded me of a very real psychological disorder called **S.A.D.**, or **Seasonal Affective Disorder**. When the sun still isn't visible by 7 AM, and can set as early as 5 PM, the shorter days can have a powerful affect. The lack of sunlight during a great part of the day can actually cause a depression in many people. This condition is more common in northern areas, where people are also experiencing limitations caused by brutally cold temperatures and snow storms. But light seems to be essential to our well-being.

The festival of Hanukkah occurs during the darkest time of year, for eight days, beginning the last few days of the Hebrew month of Kislev (this year, corresponding to December 2-9). While the holiday commemorates a military victory to retain religious freedoms, the central focus of the celebration has become the menorah; the eight branched candelabra in which additional candles are lit each night.

It got me thinking about those tiny, colorful candles we place in our own menorahs. Each one has such a small flame, especially on the first night. But when all the candles are aflame, and when multiple menorahs are lit at the same time, the beauty is almost indescribable.

And yet, even a small light can have a powerful impact. A single candle lit in a dark space can fill the room. Finding our way through darkness is frightening; a small light makes a big difference.

During dark times, it's important to consider how, where and when we can each provide even a little light. Perhaps it is visiting someone who doesn't have regular companionship. Maybe it is bringing some food or clothing or blankets to help those who need comfort. Even a smile or an unexpected kind word can shed some light into the darkness another might be experiencing.

Yes, our Hanukkah experience also focuses on gift-giving. Perhaps it is a good time to think about the intangible gifts we can give, those little gifts of light that can brighten small pockets of darkness. When many of us concentrate on sharing our own small sparks of light, the warmth will spread, and our times will brighten immeasurably!

L'shalom,  
*Rabbi Dan Gordon*