

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Be the Light – Shine with us December 10th and Beyond

As the daylight time grows shorter in the winter, we come to the Hebrew month of Kislev. The middle of the month, in the lunar calendar, includes a full moon. The end of the month is when the moon is smallest. With Kislev coming in the wintertime, the end of Kislev is truly the darkest time of the year. This is when we celebrate Hanukkah, also called the Festival of Lights. On the Hebrew calendar, it is Kislev 25-Tevet 2, bridging the darkness from the end of one month to the beginning of the next. The Gregorian calendar this year has Hanukkah also at the end of December, with the first night December 18 and the last night December 25. While driving the streets in any neighborhood during this time, you're bound to see plenty of electric lights (honoring our neighbors' holiday) that will help hide the darkness. And you may even see some subtle candlelight in windows, the glow of the Hanukkah menorah.

During the height of the Covid pandemic, many experienced a kind of darkness that comes with isolation. Even now, that many of us are returning to more "normal" activities, there still seems to be a cloud hanging by. It can be hard to break out of those feelings, especially when many things still don't feel quite "normal." Hanukkah is a reminder to bring on the light! Anne Frank, the wise teenager who kept a diary while in hiding during the Holocaust wrote, "**Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness.**" We don't need a lot of light to combat darkness. An internal spark of warmth catches on, as the light within each of us can help illuminate another's heart.

We can take some comfort when looking at the Eternal Light (in Hebrew "Ner Tamid") that shines above our Torah. Even when we are not in a sanctuary, we know that every ark in every synagogue has such a light to remind us that Torah is constant, people are constant, God's presence is constant, and our collective spirits can be constant. Individuals bring with them a unique light, and while shining, can be the spark that helps others.

Jeff Kaufman is one example within our community of such a light. He has devoted so much time and talent to helping Temple Beth Torah and the community. As a younger man, he helped save lives as an EMT, and in the 25 years or so that his family has been in Kingwood, his leadership has helped our community survive and thrive. December, approaching the year's darkest month, is the perfect time to have a *Ner Tamid* celebration to honor a shining example of what the term "**Eternal Light**" is all about. Individuals bringing their unique sparks to help others shine. Temple Beth Torah, like a single Hanukkah candle, is a small but powerful light. We illuminate the spirit of Judaism and community in a geography that can embrace our presence. And we can only do that with shining lights like Jeff Kaufman, who use their energy to light that spark, and keep us glowing.

Please join us to honor Jeff and his contributions for the Ner Tamid Award on December 10, and then come back on Friday, December 16, to add your own light to our Hanukkah celebration. And our world will continue to glow.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon