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THE HANUKKAH CEREMONY

Spiritual Meditations for Personal Rededication and Family Renewal

חֲכִנְסַת אֹרְחִים



Hospitality

תְּפִלָּה



Prayer

כִּשְׂרוֹת



Keeping Kosher

צְדָקָה



Economic Justice

מְנוֹרָה



Menorah

שְׁלוֹם



Peace

לְמוּד



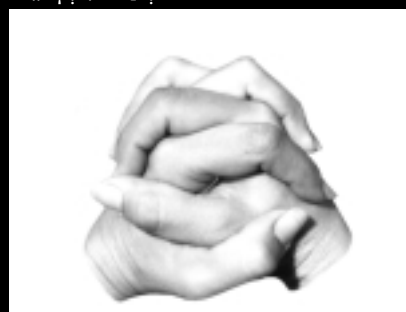
Study

שְׁלוֹם בַּיִת



Household Harmony

כָּלל יִשְׂרָאֵל



Jewish Unity

Judaism is in Your Hands

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A little kibbutznik lights her own homemade menorah created from bottle caps and white Shabbat candles.

*(Kibbutz Tzora, November 1959,
Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem)*

Introduction

“Whoever desires to penetrate the wisdom of holy unification should contemplate the flame ascending from a glowing ember or a burning candle.”

— ZOHAR, GENESIS¹

SEDER HANUKKAH

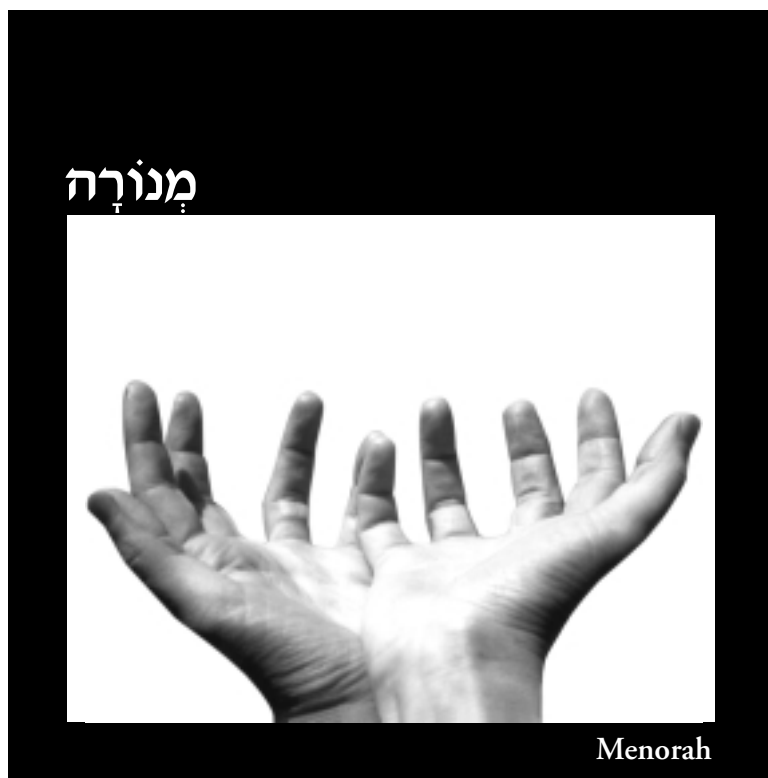
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Lawrence Bush, poster, “Judaism is in Your Hands”²

Just as Jewish tradition uses the candle as a metaphor for the human being (“God’s candle is the human soul”),³ so the Temple is a metaphor for one’s home sanctuary and one’s personal inner sanctum. The community’s Temple, *Beit HaMikdash* (literally the Home of Holiness where God dwells in the midst of the people) is analogous to the microcosm of one’s soul and one’s home, a place of sanctity whose table is akin to an altar.

Therefore, we have proposed two new optional spiritual ceremonies. First, a **Kavanot Ceremony** to be read before each candle is lit. We focus our attentions and our spiritual energies on one aspect of the power of personal sanctity (such as the search for purity or the resources of courage). Each day

of Hanukkah and each day of our lives may embody the process of increasing light, just as one more candle is added each night. The Talmud explained this nightly increase of candles, according to Hillel, in terms of the principle of *maalim bakodesh*, ever-rising levels of holiness. One must always try to climb the spiritual ladder. There is a need for ever-increasing levels of personal holiness (*kedusha*). As the oil of the Temple needed to be pure with the seal of the priest, so too, as Hasidic thought emphasizes, the people lighting the candles must try to put themselves through a self-purification process to reach higher levels of sanctity.

In addition, we have proposed a simple **Hanukkat HaBayit** (הַנְּכֹת הַבַּיִת) ceremony for **Shabbat Hanukkah** for those who want to use Hanukkah as an opportunity to deepen and explore the spiritual dimension of Jewish homelife. It invites one to rededicate one’s house to the power of holiness (*kedusha*) and the warmth of family tranquility (*shalom bayit*). Since Hanukkah has become a home holiday, it is appropriate to celebrate not only the purification and rededication of the ancient Sanctuary in Jerusalem, but also the rededication of the contemporary family hearth in an era of the decline of family unity and home activities.

1. translated by Daniel Matt

2. The concept of “Judaism is in Your Hands” derives from *Deuteronomy* 30:11-14, “Surely the teaching I command you this day is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach. For it is not in heaven . . . neither is it beyond the sea . . . No, this thing is very close to you — to your mouth and to your heart — to observe it.”

(Poster originally printed in *Reconstructionism Today*, edited by Rabbi Lawrence Bush.)

3. *Proverbs* 20:27

Kavanot Ceremony

REDEDICATING OUR INNER SANCTUM

A MEDITATION FOR CANDLE LIGHTING FOR EACH NIGHT

הַנְּנִי מוֹכֵן וּמְזַמֵּן *Hinneni Muchan Um'zuman* / Here I am ready to light the first (second, etc) candle of Hanukkah and here I stand ready to rededicate myself to achieve higher levels of personal holiness and illumination in a world of shadows. Tonight's candle is dedicated to _____ . (Name your own value for the whole family or ask each person to dedicate it to their own personal value).

בְּרָכוֹת Now proceed with *brachot* and candle lighting (p. 1) and then read one of the poems below, for the appropriate night from the *Hanukkat Habayit* poem by Chaya Kaplan-Gafni.

פְּנִינֹת

Kavanot – Candling the Inner Chambers

by Chaya Kaplan-Gafni

Hanukkah honors the house.

It is the Maccabees' renowned rededication of the House, the House of Holiness, the Beit Hamikdash.

It is the lighting of the fire in the heart, the hearth, the home of a People.

"Hanukkat Habayit" is the celebration of settling into a new home, a housewarming party of a sacred sort. It's as if with every move to a new house we celebrate a miniature Hanukkah. For each home is the manifestation of the Holy Temple in our times, in our own lives. Thus our four walls call for a Hanukkah — a dedication — the lighting of the fire that warms and sanctifies our space.

And Hanukkah's lighting of house is no less than the illumination of the inner Self. For the Self, with her secret stairways, her observing windows, her half-closed doors, is a many storied home, the abode of the soul.

Our task on these eight nights is to rededicate the Temple, in our own times, in our own lives . . . each night illumines a new aspect of self, lighting a new alcove of our inner House of Holies.

AT THE THRESHOLD

Entryway to Our Inner Self

I hesitate at the doorway, anticipating the darkness within.
The nadir of winter having wound itself around the handle, it grows too heavy for my hand.
I think there is little hope for illumination here, a cold house, neglected for years.
My eyes skirt the outer landscape for some welcomed diversion . . .
a restaurant, a neighbor, some simple task for my escape.

But I am bidden to enter. Indeed, the door was made for me alone.
For it is the doorway into my Self . . . dark as she may be, this house is the dwelling of my Soul.
Does she not deserve the illumination of my eyes, inward turned, burning for self-discovery?

I move to enter, and with surprising ease, simply slip through the door . . .
like oil spilling over ancient rock, entering the cracks . . . I have arrived at last.

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THE FIRST NIGHT

Dedicated to Darkness – the Cellar

Before you light your first candle, stand quietly for a moment in complete darkness, and let the darkness indeed be complete, with no want for anything, no need for the distractions of sight . . . simply sense the quiet Self that sits there patiently waiting for you to take notice, to turn off the television, to turn off all vision, to be quiet and sense the sanctuary that is the Self.

Standing in the cellar of my self, with an unlit candle in my hand . . . in the darkness I discover a deeper self than light lets in.

This night I dedicate to inner darkness, to the unknown, unspeakable seclusions of the soul. It is the darkness that keeps me searching . . . a worthy opponent, provoking my path to further reaches, my thoughts to further depths. It is the as-of-yet unilluminated, unanswered aspects of an unraveling self, the landscape of dreams and nightmares, tragic truths and fears.

I dedicate this night to every question I have quested after,
to every confusion that has humbled me,
to every challenge I have mastered,
to the thrill of secrecy.

As this candle casts a shadow, my self in dark outline,
I integrate and dedicate the darkness with the light.
The first night is for the dark cellar of winter,
that which illumines a deeper insight.

THE SECOND NIGHT



Dedicated to Ascension – the Stairway

Standing at the stairs, sights set on ascension.

As you light your candle, envision a stairway rising before you, each step a soul ascension made with a worthy act . . . each good word you have spoken, each good work done by your hands. See how each step leads to the next. Dedicate yourself to singular steps in an upward direction . . . go out of your way to do one new kindness every one of these eight days, for each is a link in the ever increasing chain of compassion that stretches out before you.

This night I dedicate to increase, to the second step of every path.

This is the move towards abundance, to building in increments, an ordered process.

The treasures of the house of Hillel tell of holiness that it should only increase, ever-rise.

Thus it was decreed that we light an additional candle to mark each night . . .

For holiness, like light and all luminescent goodness, should always advance, like an ascending staircase, ever more inclined, increased, enhanced.

Just as each good act gives forth another, one spark springs forth to a second wick, while a string of candles await.

I stand at the stairway from my depths, ready to rise, to explore.

Having found my foundation in the darkness,

I move with upward momentum, the second night, the second step, the strength to start . . .

THE THIRD NIGHT



Dedicated to Decisions – the Hallway

Imagine yourself in a hallway, an endless corridor
before you an offering of options, a series of dark wood doors
each opening widens with opportunity, each offers an unknowable path,
letting you choose, demanding you move, challenging you to act

. . . which door do you lunge for?

The hallway is where I will my way through the world.

It is the narrowness that leads to expansion, where one knock determines whole destinies.

This hallway calls for precision, decision, the analysis of options, the care and the courage to choose true, exact, correct. This corridor is the tension before any great act — when the moment calls for a deeper determination to raise it from the vast heap of mundane happenings, to let it become a great occurrence in the course of life.

This night is dedicated to direction, to making decisions in the dark, to taking the leap of faith that leads to miracles. From the narrowness of the Greek domination, the Maccabees chose no less than the doorway to vastest freedom. They did not remain confined, nor walk through assimilation's passive door, but rather lunged for the doorway of self-dominion and independence, fearless of the fight on the other side.

Standing in a hollow hallway, doorways blind my eyes,

I contemplate the path to my future, light three candles as my guide.

THE FOURTH NIGHT



Dedicated to the Senses – the Dining Room

See yourself seated at a silvered table, set stately for some feast,
You are guest and host and caterer, called to task, to eat . . .

How full is your plate, how great is your need . . .
Is your spirit nourished as your body feeds?

The fourth night is dedicated to the dining room and her sister space the kitchen. This is the seat of appetite, brimming with all things delightful to the senses. At the center of the table is a fine serving bowl of *shemen*, olive oil, for *shemen* is the sign of the paradox of the sensual, where the sublime and the material meet and dine together, either in harmony or in utter disarray. *Shemen*, the anointing oil of Kings, the markings of Messiah, the essential symbol of Hanukkah, is the dripping robe of Redemption itself.

It is the nourishment for the candle, that upon which the holy flame feeds.

It is the utmost of sublime, but it is also the basest of the mundane. Meaning also “fat” (*shamein*), it signifies all that is thick and physical, the ultimate image of the material world, the mass where spirit resides.

This night is dedicated to delicate balances
where our desires come to dine
offering pleasure in each embellishment
fuel for the fire of life
.....though oil anoints and nourishes
overpour and it will put out the light.

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THE FIFTH NIGHT



Dedicated to Defiance – the Outer Courtyard and the Inner Will

See yourself standing in a courtyard stained with suffering.
Stationed before you are Hannah and her seven sons.
They stare down Antiochus and a torturous task –
denying their identity or facing their death.

They are a family forced to the edge of existence, given ultimatums they refuse to fulfill.
You are an observer in the outer courtyard, what says your inner will?

The fifth night finds my strength tested.

This night is dedicated to standing strong against external forces, refusing to fold to the host of voices that beckon me away from my core. This is the night of Hannah and her seven sons, caught in an outer courtyard, called upon to convert, to conform to an alien world.

This is a night dedicated to persistence . . . a night not afraid to sacrifice. It is a night of knowing one's identity, of being grounded in an inner courtyard of calm and courage, regardless of the chaos of the world outside.

In the cold of the outer courtyard, crowded with calls to comply,
I call upon the powers of my own inner will, to courageously defy.

THE SIXTH NIGHT



Dedicated to Rebirth – the Bedroom

Your eyes are clouded beneath a canopy,
your limbs lie in linen, in your mouth one last breath . . .
Recall the colors of your days, are you satisfied with the path you have tread . . .
make peace with your person, and resigned to dying, find yourself re-born instead . . .

The sixth night leads me to the bedroom, painted with scenes of the Self in her several stages . . . the same four walls redecorated and redecorated. For one lifetime witnesses many lives, many bodies worn and shed, personalities developed and discarded, many births and many deaths. Just as Jerusalem's Temple was lost and won and lost again . . . so too are we forever falling, and redefining, losing and re-finding, a new beginning born with every end.

Nightly I lay my soul to rest here, my breath slows, the world recedes, I experience the end of all, only to dream . . . and be reborn, burdenless to the morning. The bed a soft cocoon, a womb, a tomb . . . a room of rejuvenation. These are the four walls of rebirthing — where the bed of birth becomes the bed of death — the drive to end yet begin again.

The six flames lift from the ash like a phoenix, reviving life in her circular stride.
Though history be a looping spiral, Redemption lies at the end of the line.

THE SEVENTH NIGHT



Dedicated to “Advertising the Miracle” – the Light in the Window

As you stand lighting at the window, raise your eyes to look outside,
And behold a face before you, some curious passerby
And then realize it is your reflection, in the window glass, your own eyes
What have you seen in the window's mirror . . . what miracle do you advertise?

The seventh night is dedicated to the window to the world.
This is where the strength and purpose that I have nurtured within
are celebrated in the sight of others.
This is the show of lights that sparkles forth from Self. It is the commandment of Hanukkah
to do *pirsum hanes* — “to advertise the miracle,” the miracle that was wrought in history,
that is wrought within me.

May my eyes behold the miracles shining forth from each passing soul . . .
And as I gaze into their windows may my own miracle be beheld as I behold..

THE EIGHTH NIGHT



Dedicated to Dedication – the Open Door to Redemption

The shamash stands silent at the open door, silhouetted before an inner light.

She ushers in a new guest, a new age, as the Messiah steps to her side.

Having journeyed through self to but arrive at the selfless,

the shamash has the final goal of discovery held solid in her outstretched hand.

The eighth night is the night of the **shamash**, the candle that lights all other lights.

The **shamash** is the mystical servant, the symbol of service in the world.

I dedicate this night to the self who serves, to the self who has striven for perfection for the sake of the greater whole.

She is the radiant Self of the selfless servant . . . open and extending, sharing light and life, like a flame never diminished with its spreading, giving forth freely of the source that lights us all.

The eighth night is dedicated to dedication, the dedication of the **shamash** to the service of humankind. She is an open invitation, the current which connects door to neighbor's door — house to neighbor's house, self to community, to nation, world and the utmost of the universe.

The **shamash**, the supreme usher, welcomes us into our own House of Holies . . . and Redemption follows in its wake.

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A new immigrant child in Israel blesses the Hanukkah menorah adorned with the priestly benediction, as indicated by the hands with the divided fingers.

(December 1951, Central Zionist Organization, Jerusalem)



A PARABLE
AND
A POEM
FOR
SPIRITUAL
REFLECTION

To be a Lamplighter

by Menachem Mendel Schneersohn

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe from 1950 to 1994)²

The Hasid once asked: “Rebbe, what is a Jew’s task in this world?”

The Rebbe answered: “A Jew is a lamp-lighter on the streets of the world.

In olden days, there was a person in every town who would light the gas street-lamps with a light he carried at the end of a long pole. On the street corners, the lamps were there in readiness, waiting to be lit; a lamp-lighter has a pole with a flame supplied by the town. He knows that the fire is not his own, and he goes around lighting all the lamps on his route.”

The Hasid asked: “But what if the lamp is in a desolate wilderness?”

The Rebbe answered: “Then, too, one must light it. Let it be noted that there is a wilderness, and let the wilderness feel ashamed before the light.”

“But what if the lamp is in the midst of a sea?”

“Then one must take off one’s clothes, jump into the water and light it there!”

“And that is a Jew’s mission?”

The Rebbe thought for a long moment and then said: “Yes, that is a Jew’s calling.”

The Hasid continued: “Rebbe, I see no lamps!”

The Rebbe answered: “That is because you are not yet a lamp-lighter.”

The Hasid asked: “How does one become a lamplighter?”

The Rebbe replied: “One must begin with oneself, cleansing oneself, becoming more refined, then one sees the other as a source of light, waiting to be ignited. When, Heaven forbid, one is crude, then one sees but crudeness; but when one is noble, one sees nobility.”

Today, the lamps are there, but they need to be lit. It is written, “The soul of the human is a lamp of God,”³ and it is also written, “A mitzvah is a lamp and the Torah is light.”⁴ A Jew is one who puts personal affairs aside and goes around lighting up the souls of others with the light of Torah and mitzvot. Jewish souls are in readiness to be lit. Sometimes they are around the corner. Sometimes they are in a wilderness or at sea. But there must be someone who disregards personal comforts and conveniences and goes out to put a light to these lamps, to ignite these souls. That is the true calling of a Jew — to be a lamplighter, an igniter of souls.

2. Based on *Sichot HaRebbe* (Talks) from the years 5701, 5700, 5722.

3. *Proverbs* 20:27 4. *Proverbs* 6:23



Those Who Walk in Darkness

by Naomi Shemer⁵

(the contemporary national song writer of Israel, winner of the Israel Prize, who wrote Jerusalem of Gold)

“Those who walk in darkness will see the great light.”
Those who yearn for freedom will find a home.
Darkness rules over the lights
and those who stand, still search for miracles.

Who will light a candle for the future?
Who will sing a song?
Who will find in their heart a new bright light?
In yesterday’s torch, the fire will still burn.
Sometimes a great miracle occurs.

The candles are lit on my window sill.
There are some who will know how to solve my dream.
It is the same story, the same play
“in those days and at this time.”⁶

Don’t promise me miracles and wonders.
Even the fog is a sign of the future.
In a stormy season, don’t retreat.
On your way you will find hope and light.

“Those who walk in darkness will see the great light.”⁷



An old street lamp in Prague

5. Song reprinted by permission of ACUM.
6. Based on the prophet Isaiah: “The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light, on those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” (*Isaiah* 9:1)
7. Quoted from the blessing for Hanukkah candles, *Al Hanissim*, “who made miracles possible for our ancestors in those days and at this time.”

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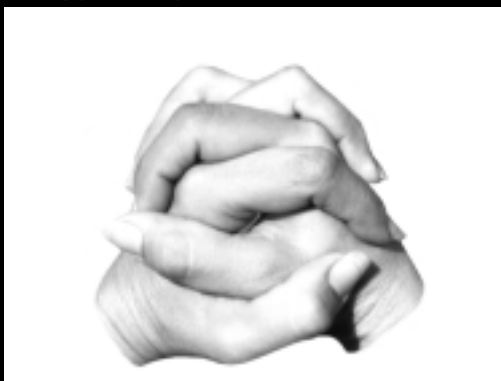
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Jewish Unity

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by Rabbi Lawrence Bush

חֲנֻכַּת הַבַּיִת

Hanukat HaBayit Ceremony

REDEDICATING OUR HOME ON SHABBAT HANUKKAH

by Noam Zion

At the conjunction of Shabbat and Hanukkah, when two sets of lights converge, we have an opportunity for increased spiritual awareness of the sanctity of one's home. Shabbat candles celebrate *shalom bayit*, the peace of one's home, while Hanukkah commemorates the successful thwarting of the threat to our national home, the Temple called the Holy Bayit/Home. Tonight we recall the historical invasion and desecration of the Jerusalem Temple, as well as the subsequent efforts to purify and rededicate our personal temple.

We also wish to acknowledge the contemporary difficulties in keeping our home life pure and strong, a center of joy and of spiritual nourishment. We rededicate ourselves on Shabbat Hanukkah to the life-giving values of a Jewish home, knowing that this process involves serious commitments of time, emotion and energy.

THE BLESSINGS

First we light the Hanukkah candles as usual (page 1). Then we light Shabbat candles (page 2), even before singing the Hanukkah songs. The *shamash* may be used to light the Shabbat candles in order to connect these two holidays — Hanukkah and Shabbat — which intersect and produce a special energy on this night.

The traditional Shabbat meditation for women is appropriate and the blessing for one's children may be used. (see The Passover **Family Participation Haggadah, A Different Night**, page 18).

THE CEREMONY

Now begins the special *Hanukat HaBayit* Ceremony rededicating our home. We rededicate ourselves to eight values of a Jewish home, one for each night of Hanukkah. Ask each family member, in turn, to read aloud one of the eight selections:

1. הַכְּנֵסֶת אֹרְחִים HACHNASAT ORCHIM / WELCOMING GUESTS AND ACCOMPANYING THEM AS THEY DEPART

No holiday meal is complete without guests, old friends and relatives as well as new acquaintances and travellers. The private space, our home, which we have been able to secure, must remain open and accessible to strangers as Abraham's tent was open in four directions so a guest would not be embarrassed while trying to find a way in. When guests arrived, Abraham and Sarah were quick to run and prepare meat and cakes and make the guests feel at home.

From Abraham we also learn the art of leave taking, how to accompany guests not only to the door but on their way. Jewish law is concerned to make sure that the traveller has a secure way home, since we know the road and its dangers.

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2. הַשׁוֹמֵר אֶחָי אֲנִי HASHOMER / "I AM MY BROTHER'S AND SISTER'S KEEPER."

Solidarity within our nuclear family, our Jewish family and our human family is the central tenet of home life. Helping do the collective work, offering support when someone is ill or personally distressed and even giving advice — judiciously phrased and tuned — are concrete expressions of being one another's "keepers." The Rabbis insisted that "All of the people of Israel are guarantors one for the other."

3. וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֵיךָ TORAH / "TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN"

As we recall daily in Shma Yisrael, a parent should not neglect any opportunity to discuss a life of values, Torah, with his or her offspring. "When you lie down and when you get up, when you go out and when you sit at home."⁶ The secret power of informal education is to turn everyday events into opportunities for learning and teaching. Rabbi Akiba, when he was a student, once "snuck" into his teacher's outhouse at night so he could observe how to conduct himself in intimate issues of personal hygiene. In trying to explain to his teacher the invasion of privacy, Akiba said simply, "This too is a matter of Torah and it must be learned from a master."

6. Deuteronomy 6:7

4. וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבָנֶיךָ HAGGADAH / "TELLING YOUR CHILDREN STORIES"

Not only on Pesach, but on every family occasion family stories need to be told and memories revisited and reinterpreted. The narratives of our Biblical ancestors, our family albums and the report of our daily journeys are the substance of the Jewish cultivation of memory in the home. Cultivating the art of storytelling is the Jew's greatest tool to lead the next generation to connect their lives with their ancestors. Each recipient of a story must make it his or her own, feeling "as if you personally went out from Egypt" and retelling the tale in the first person to one's children and one's students.

5. קַבֵּלַת שֶׁבֶת *KABBALAT SHABBAT* / WELCOMING THE SHECHINAH, THE DIVINE PRESENCE

On Shabbat Jews traditionally welcome the spiritual presence of the Divine Shechinah and God's angels by singing *Shalom Aleichem* / שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם. When we visit the Holy Temple or synagogue, we tread gingerly as guests in God's sanctuary, however on Shabbat we become God's hosts inviting the Shechinah into our home, making God feel comfortable among us, making room for spirituality as an active, intimate and familiar presence among us.

6. שְׁלוֹם בַּיִת *SHALOM BAYIT* / DOMESTIC PEACE

At home when powerfully driven individuals retreat into the inner sanctum of the family, the priority should be compromise. Foregoing our will and seeking to harmonize with others is the prerequisite for achieving the tranquility and solidarity of home life. *Shalom Bayit* involves an effort of mutual reconciliation and the peace of the home is achieved only after that has been attempted.

The Shabbat candles offer the light necessary for socializing around the table. They represent *Shalom Bayit* and take precedence over Hanukkah candles that symbolize the miraculous battle for dignity and freedom.

7. הַדוּר מִצְוָה *HIDUR MITZVAH* / BEAUTIFYING YOUR HOME AND YOUR MITZVOT

The Rabbis appreciated the role of aesthetics in human life. As they used to say, "A beautiful house, beautiful utensils and a beautiful spouse expand one's consciousness." Therefore they commended one who spends extra effort and extra funds on beautifying the mitzvot they do, such as buying a particularly nice lulav and etrog on Sukkot, using extra candles and an attractive menorah on Hanukkah and preparing an especially rich meal when the poor are invited to dinner. Our gifts to God and to fellow human beings must be performed not minimally, to do our duty, but with added investment to show our joy in their performance. In this sense beautifying our homes is not a matter of external ostentation but an internal expression of our desire to expand our consciousness and to give pleasure to our Creator and to God's human creatures.

8. מַעֲלִין בְּקוֹדֶשׁ *KEDUSHA* / CONSTANT GROWTH IN HOLINESS

A home must encourage the individual growth of its members, even though change may be threatening to the family equilibrium. Trusting in one another's power of self transcendence and growth, we allow the individuals and the group to grow constantly in their spirituality just as the Hanukkah candles grow night by night adding more and more light and holiness.