



Shabbat Miketz
27 Kislev 5778 / December 15, 2017

Dear Shir Tikvah:

What we give our attention to grows. In deep recognition of this, kabbalists in Spain in the 12th century when celebrating Chanukah would focus their attention on the light of the candle, trying to identify individual colors in the dancing flame. Each color would remind them of a different aspect of the Divine, of a different attribute of strength and resilience within them. Each color would remind them of the possibility of growing light in the depth of night.

We're halfway through Chanukah and have nearly made it to the shortest day of the year. Chanukah is the festival of light, when we focus on rekindling sparks of possibility in the face of adversity and hopelessness. As we face terrible policy decisions, when we contend with random acts of unkindness and racism, sexism and homophobia at school or at work, when we collide with the limits of our own hope or resilience, Chanukah helps us cultivate the possibility of finding hope and nourishment in difficult moments.

Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook wrote:

Each of us should know that each of us has within us a candle ablaze. Each of our candles is completely unique. There is no one who does not have within them a candle. Each of us should know that we must work to show each other the light of our candles, so that our flame will grow big and strong, like a torch, and illuminate the whole world.

There are times when our candles feel dim or flickering. These times want to push us to the edge, to limit our imaginations and plant in us feelings of doubt and scarcity. Just like we worry that a candle will go out when it's put in a windy place, there can be moments in our lives when our own candles might feel like they're sputtering. What can we do to make sure we're taking care of ourselves during those moments? How can we let the people who love us know that our candles are flickering, that we might extend compassion to each other.

What we give our attention to grows. When we take time in the darkness of this wintery week to focus on the glow of tiny, golden flames, we remind ourselves of the sparks that we carry inside of us. Even in these challenging times, we have the power to focus on possibility of healing and growth, of compassion and solidarity, of system transformation and renewal. May we keep our sparks dancing, may we kindle each other's flame, that we might be torches of justice and love ablaze together.

Shabbat shalom v'chag urim sameach,
Rabbi Arielle Rosenberg