

## **WHY ARE CHANUKAH LIGHTS DIFFERENT FROM ALL LIGHTS OF THE YEAR?**

Instead of reading lights, try reading nights! Then we may know where we are as that question has been the major lead into Passover. It's a curious way of introducing a festival even though it is borrowed from that never fully answered question by a perennial Jewish child.

However on Chanukah it is lights. What makes it so gripping? Why of all the festivals, major and minor has Chanukah become embedded in the hearts and minds of so many? Indeed as a Jewish symbol its rating is possibly the highest.

An even closer analysis throws up yet more anomalies. If The Temple the holiest of all places had seven lights, why does Chanukah which remembers it have one more? If the Temple lights were kindled at daytime, why are the Chanukah lights lit after sunset?

And here comes the big one. The Temple lights are inside and the Chanukah lights are placed emphatically on the outside? The list goes on.

The beginnings to the solution to the mystery goes back a long long time. But some insight we can gain from the writings of the great Jewish Talmudist and Philosopher, Rabbi Joseph Albo. (He was famous among other things for the great forced disputation he individually held against a whole team of bishops and imprisoned because he won.!

Light, he says was chosen as the ultimate metaphor for G-dliness for no less than six reasons. Others added more. It cannot be denied, it causes sight and it delights the soul amongst other qualities.

But significantly it appears that two factors combine in propelling Chanukah to the very top of our attention and focus. Indeed, one feeds off the other.

Firstly, it was a response to cruel oppression. Both oppression and equally suppression have a habit of initially being effective but then rebounding with an even greater energy than before like a bursting dam. Millions of Jews today across all time zones, in the Synagogues and in the Malls, on mountains or beaches light their Menorah and as testimony to true human spirit gazing in to the lights peering for the eternity in its ever flickering lights.

And the second, believe it or not is technology, with over a billion people accessed to the Internet and many billions watching TV, their eyes and their sight are drawn to that which is true and eternal and that what gives delight and refreshment to their soul. No face or character remains untouched by its luminance.

We all need to savour the flavour of the Chanukah light. It did wonders not only in the past but the greater wonders are yet to come.

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