

Happy New Year!

Here at Have Faith Haiti the New Year is greeted with sparklers—one for every student, and when they are lit, each student makes a wish. For the younger children, the sparklers are stuck into the ground in front of them. The older kids hold their own.



WHAT WOULD YOU WISH FOR?

Because the common New Year began with sparklers, I thought about our New Year. According to tradition, Rosh Hashanah marks the anniversary of Creation and the first of God's creations was light. That's how I began my remarks in church, on Sunday, January 1 (Yes, I always go to their services and speak when I am here on a Sunday). I pointed out that although light was created on the first day, the sun, moon, and stars were not created until day four. So what was the nature of that first light? It was an emanation from God, and then, according to one *Midrash*, God stored it up for the righteous in the world to come. But I have a feeling that God placed some of it in the first human being, Adam. And from Adam, that hidden light of God was passed down to all who followed. That's why the Book of Proverbs (20:27) teaches "*Ner Adonai, Nishmat Adam* - God's candle is the soul of the human being." So, there is a bit of God's light in each of us.



That led to another idea about light. It comes from the menorah we use on Hanukkah. So, I showed them how when you use the *Shamash* to light the other candles, the flame of the *Shamash* remains as bright as it was before, and now there is even more light. They got it immediately: when we share our light with others in ideas and kind acts, the light increases and our own light remains as strong as ever.

A PARABLE

One night, an angel of God sent two people out into the world to see and report back on what they found. One took a torch, while the other went empty-handed. When they returned, the one who went empty-handed reported that all of the world was dark and gloomy. But the one with torch said that everywhere he went he found things to be bright with a warm glow. Perhaps that is why the Psalmist says: “Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on an even path, for with You is the source of life; by Your light we see light.” (36:9)

I wonder where these kids will take the light they have found at Have Faith Haiti - the enlightenment of learning and the joy of lighting sparklers together at the start of a New Year. My hope and wish for them is that they will live by that light and carry it with them wherever they go, for all the years to come.

We finished our little lesson by gathering around the *Hanukiyah* and singing “This Little Light of Mine.”

By the way, that’s the melody Cantor Cohen uses for part of Hallel on *Hanukkah*. The words there are from Ps. 118: “*Ana Adonai Hoshiyana*—Please, Lord, grant us salvation; *Ana Adonai Hatzlihana*—Please God, grant us success.” That also makes a great wish for a New Year...for the kids at Have Faith Haiti...for us...for all. And who knows, maybe it will come true, if we let that little light shine.

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