

WOMEN'S FIRE AND WOMEN'S LIGHT: THE MITZVAH OF CHANUKAH CANDLES

Stephanie Cleveland

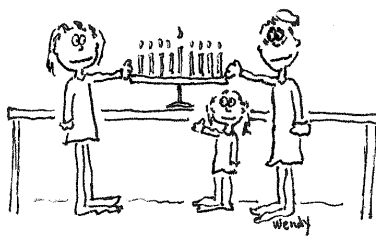
According to the Talmud, the lighting of Chanukah candles is one of only three time-bound, positive *mitzvot* that women are required to perform. So I was surprised to learn that many traditional women opt to have their husbands or another male relative fulfill the requirement of kindling the Chanukah lights for them. Given that this is one ritual that has been specifically designated for women, I would like to briefly explore why the lighting of the Chanukah candles should be seen as a particularly important *mitzvah* for Jewish women to fulfill.

When comparing the lighting of Shabbat candles to Chanukah candles, one notices that both are rabbinic commandments not found in the Torah, and that the blessings (first Chanukah blessing) recited for both are almost identical. The tradition of lighting Shabbat candles has become strongly associated with women. Traditionally, it is the woman who thus welcomes the *Shechinah* or the Shabbat Queen into the Jewish home.

The fundamental purpose that the Shabbat candles serve is to ensure that there will be light in the house, light to inspire *Shalom Bayit*, peace in the home, filling one's dwelling with G-d's presence and peace. Shabbat candles are placed on or near an inner table. Their light is private, designed to cast light in the spaces where a woman lives with her family, but not outside that sphere. In this way, Shabbat candles cast light on the work that has been traditionally associated with women--cleaning and cooking, homemaking and the unpaid work of caring for and raising children--work that is generally not witnessed publicly, and therefore frequently devalued. The Shabbat candles are practical as well, in that their light may be used while finishing the preparations for the Sabbath meal, or to provide light at the table for those dining.

By contrast, Chanukah lights must be used for no other utilitarian purpose. The *mitzvah* is in the actual act of *lighting* each candle flame, rather than the goal of having an illuminated home. Chanukah lights cannot be set in a private part of the house. Instead, they need to be near a *petach*, an opening such as a window or door so that those who pass by can contemplate what G-d's presence in the world means, beholding a symbol of the miracles that G-d has wrought for humankind.

I would argue that the lighting of the Chanukah Menorah also offers a unique opportunity to think of the contributions of Jewish women, which is at times downplayed. Perhaps the best example of women's capacity for active strength can be found in the book of Judith, a post-biblical Jewish work not included in the Torah, but nonetheless long associated with Chanukah and Jewish women's bravery.



"BY LIGHTING THE CHANUKAH CANDLES WE WOMEN SHOW THAT WE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE"

Few people are familiar with Judith's story. Judith was a childless widow who refused to allow herself to be defined in chiefly sexual terms or by her reproductive capacity. Judith challenges her town's (male) magistrates over their decision to surrender to the enemy Greek armies of Antiochus if G-d does not save them within five days. While the men around her seek compromise, Judith boldly proclaims that G-d will save Israel by her hand. She visits the commander of the opposition and encourages him to drink himself into a stupor. She then slices off his head. So much for the idea of woman as the "gentler sex." When Judith returns to the Israelites, she tells the town officials they can now mount a counter attack, which they do, and win.

Judith's story was deeply associated with Chanukah. Like the story of the Maccabees, it shares the theme of Jewish faith and courage overcoming forces that seem insurmountable. The rabbis, who included Judith in their Chanukah narratives, believed her bravery should be remembered. But, like so many Jewish women, Judith's accomplishments have been partially written out of history. This is precisely why the act of a Jewish woman lighting Chanukah candles for her household has profound significance. Those who view a woman's candles have an opportunity to remember the historical tenacity of Jewish women--not just the self-sacrifice of Jewish mothers during the Holocaust who went without food so that their children might stand a better chance at survival, but less traditionally feminine modes of resistance as well. In lighting the Chanukah candles, women can remember the flame and fire of our courage.

The Chanukah lights, set by a window, challenge us to move outside our comfort zones as women. The requirement to create light--to set a blaze--forces us to acknowledge that there is nothing innately passive about us. We are capable of action. We remember the courage of Judith. We honor women's ability to walk with G-d, not in deference or meekness, but through an assertive will toward *Tikkun Olam*. Chanukah tells us to strive for those moments in each of our lives in which we can create light--light that, like the light of a candle flame, is in constant motion. Like G-d and like women, this light is not meant to be possessed visually, ogled or looked at for too long. Its power is not so much in its beauty as a useable *thing*, but in its capacity for bringing about change. It can burn down a village or cook a meal, warm a hearth or light a dark passageway. Chanukah lights tell us that we create light by daring to venture outside ourselves, pushing forward in our own right as G-d's emissaries.

Stephanie Cleveland grew up in rural Georgia. Her poetry has appeared in Boston Review, Denver Quarterly, Women's Studies Quarterly and others. As a feminist activist, Stephanie has also spoken nationally against pornography and the global sex industry

CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV

ENGAGEMENTS

Rebecca Weiner and Yeruchem Pliner
Mazal Tov to parents
Sandra Weiner and
Marc (Moshe) Weiner



Meryl Degen and Albert (Raphie) Louzoun,
on the birth of a baby boy, Ayden Dov
Nancy and Doug (Moshe) Rose, on the birth of a baby girl,
Avital Rivka (Audrey Rebecca)
Batya and Yitzchak, on the birth of a baby girl, Binaya Tal
Mazal Tov to Saba, Andy Siegel

BIRTHS

Shira and Naphtali Buchwald, on the birth of a baby girl, Michal
Mazal Tov to grandparents Aidel and Ephraim Buchwald
Riki and Rabbi Zvi Gewirtz, on the birth of a baby girl, Naomi
Mazal Tov to grandparents Barbara Gewirtz
and Shlomo Dov Gewirtz
Dina and Andrew Kramer, on the birth of twins,
Naomi and Matthew
Dr. Victoria Chernyak and Stas Krasinski,
on the birth of a baby girl, Miriam Ravital
Leora Yehudit (Akiko Ike) and Mordy Lahasky,
on the birth of a baby boy, Yohonasan David

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Mikaela Belsky
Mazal Tov to grandparents Miriam and Dr. Marvin Belsky
Betsalel Bousbib
Mazal Tov to parents Heléne and Ari Bousbib
Rachel Rosenblatt
Mazal Tov to parents Barbara Goldstein
and Robert Rosenblatt
Eitan Avraham Schiller
Mazal Tov to parents Gail and Doug Schiller

CONDOLENCES

Rosalie Fields on the loss of her mother, Anne Hodes
To the family of Stu Hample (tribute on page 3)
Donna Ritter, on the loss of her father, Melvin Ritter
Pamela Title, on the loss of her mother, Beulah Title

SPEEDY RECOVERY/REFUAH SH'LAIMA

Mark Fisher, Moshe Chaim ben Chana
Regina Ullendorff, Rachel bat Feige

CONGRATULATIONS

Jesse Giles upon recently passing the N.Y. State Bar exam

TODAH RABBAH

Seth and Emily Gerszberg and Michelle and Eli Salig,
for enabling the Reich family to be with us on the
High Holidays
Irwin Mandel for cleaning the talitot for the High Holidays
Roberto Novig for the splendid ushering job on the High
Holidays

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Wed December 1, 2010- 24th of Kislev
 Mincha & Maariv 4:20 PM
 Light 1 candle after 5:01 PM

Thu December 2, 2010- 25th of Kislev
CHANUKAH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Light 2 candles after 5:01 PM

Fri December 3, 2010- 26th of Kislev
CHANUKAH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Light 3 candles before/Candle Lighting 4:12 PM
 Mincha 4:15 PM

Sat December 4, 2010 - 27th of Kislev
CHANUKAH Miketz
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 3:15 PM
 Mincha 4:00 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends/Light 4 candles after 5:12 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 4:15 PM

Sun December 5, 2010- 28th of Kislev
CHANUKAH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 8:30 AM
 Light 5 candles after 5:00 PM

Mon December 6, 2010- 29th of Kislev
CHANUKAH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Light 6 candles after 5:00 PM

Tues December 7, 2010- 30th of Kislev
CHANUKAH ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Light 7 candles after 5:00 PM

Wed December 8, 2010- 1st of Tevet
CHANUKAH ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Light 8 candles after 5:00 PM

Thu December 9, 2010- 2nd of Tevet
CHANUKAH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM

Fri December 10, 2010- 3rd of Tevet
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:11 PM
 Mincha 4:15 PM

Sat December 11, 2010 - 4th of Tevet
Vayigash
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 3:15 PM
 Mincha 4:00 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:11 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 4:15 PM

Fri December 17, 2010- 10th of Tevet
A'SARAH B'TEVET
 Fast begins at 6:01 AM
 Morning Services 6:50 & 7:40 AM
 Mincha 4:05 PM
 Candle Lighting 4:13 PM
 Kiddush after 5:02 PM

Sat December 18, 2010 - 11th of Tevet
Vayechee
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 3:15 PM
 Mincha 4:00 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:13 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 4:20 PM

Fri December 24, 2010- 17th of Tevet
LEGAL HOLIDAY
 Morning Services 7:10 & 8:30 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:16 PM
 Mincha 4:20 PM

Sat December 25, 2010 - 18th of Tevet
Shemot
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 3:20 PM
 Mincha 4:05 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:16 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 4:25 PM

Fri December 31, 2010- 24th of Tevet
LEGAL HOLIDAY
 Morning Services 7:10 & 8:30 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:21 PM
 Mincha 4:25 PM

Sat January 1, 2011 - 25th of Tevet
Vaerah
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 3:25 PM
 Mincha 4:10 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:21 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 4:30 PM

Thu Jan 6, 2011 - 1st of Shevat
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM

Fri Jan 7, 2010 - 2nd of Shevat
 Morning Services 8:00 & 9:00 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:27 PM
 Mincha 4:30 PM

Sat Jan 8, 2011 - 3rd of Shevat Bo
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 3:30 PM
 Mincha 4:15 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:27 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 4:35 PM

Fri Jan 14, 2011 - 9th of Shevat
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:35 PM
 Mincha 4:40 PM

Sat Jan 15, 2011 - 10th of Shevat Beshalach
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 3:40 PM
 Mincha 4:25 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:35 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 4:45 PM

Mon Jan 17, 2011 - 11th of Shevat
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:50 AM

Fri Jan 21, 2011 - 16th of Shevat
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:43 PM
 Mincha 4:50 PM

Sat Jan 22, 2011 - 17th of Shevat Yitro
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 3:50 PM
 Mincha 4:35 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:43 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 4:50 PM

Fri Jan 28, 2011 - 23rd of Shevat
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:51 PM
 Mincha 4:55 PM

Sat Jan 29, 2011 - 24th of Shevat Mishpatim
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 3:55 PM
 Mincha 4:40 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:51 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:00 PM

Fri Feb 4, 2011 - 30th of Shevat
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:00 PM
 Mincha 5:05 PM

Sat Feb 5, 2011 - 1st of Adar I
ROSH CHODESH Teruma
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:05 PM
 Mincha 4:50 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:00 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:10 PM

Fri Feb 11, 2011 - 7th of Adar I
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:08 PM
 Mincha 5:15 PM

Sat Feb 12, 2011 - 8th of Adar I Tetzaveh
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:15 PM
 Mincha 5:00 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:08 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:15 PM

Fri Feb 18, 2011 - 14th of Adar I
PURIM KATAN
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:17 PM
 Mincha 5:20 PM

Sat Feb 19, 2011 - 15th of Adar I
SHUSHAN PURIM KATAN Ki Tisa
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:20 PM
 Mincha 5:05 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:17 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:25 PM

Mon Feb 21, 2011 - 17th of Adar I
PRESIDENT'S DAY
 Morning Services 7:10 & 8:30 AM

Fri Feb 25, 2011 - 21st of Adar I
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:25 PM
 Mincha 5:30 PM

Sat Feb 12, 2011 - 22nd of Adar I Vayakhel
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:30 PM
 Mincha 5:15 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:25 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:35 PM

Fri Mar 4, 2011 - 28th of Adar I
SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:33 PM
 Mincha 5:40 PM

Sat Mar 5, 2011 - 29th of Adar I
Pekudei - Parshat Shekalim
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:40 PM
 Mincha 5:25 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:33 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:40 PM

Sun Mar 6, 2011 - 1st of Adar II
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM

Fri Mar 11, 2011 - 5th of Adar II
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:41 PM
 Mincha 5:45 PM

Sat Mar 12, 2011 - 6th of Adar II Vayikra
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:45 PM
 Mincha 5:30 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:41 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 6:50 PM
Move clock forward

Thu Mar 17, 2011 - 11th of Adar II
TA'ANIT ESTHER
 Fast Begins 5:50 AM
 Morning Services 6:50 & 7:40 AM
 Mincha 6:40 PM
 Fast Ends 7:36 PM

Fri Mar 18, 2011 - 12th of Adar II
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 6:49 PM
 Mincha 6:55 PM

Sat Mar 19, 2011 - 13th of Adar II
Tzav - Parashat Zachor
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 5:55 PM
 Mincha 6:40 PM
 Zachor reading after Mussaf and Mincha
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 7:49 PM
 Megilla Reading 8:20 PM
 Additional Megilla Reading 10:00 PM

Sun Mar 20, 2011 - 14th of Adar II PURIM
 Morning Services 6:45 & 9:00 AM
 Early Mincha & Megilla Reading 1:40 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 6:55 PM

Fri Mar 25, 2011 - 19th of Adar II
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 6:56 PM
 Mincha 7:00 PM

Sat March 26, 2011 - 20th of Adar II
Shemini - Parshat Parah
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 6:00 PM
 Mincha 6:45 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 7:56 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 7:05 PM

Fri April 1, 2011 - 26th of Adar II
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 7:03 PM
 Mincha 7:10 PM

Sat April 2, 2011 - 27th of Adar II Tazria
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 6:10 PM
 Mincha 6:55 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 8:03 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 7:10 PM

Tue April 5, 2011 - 1st of Nisan
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM

Fri April 8, 2011 - 4th of Nisan
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 7:11 PM
 Mincha 7:15 PM

Sat April 9, 2011 - 5th of Nisan Metzora
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Class 6:15 PM
 Mincha 7:00 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 8:11 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 7:20 PM

Fri April 15, 2011 - 11th of Nisan
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Candle Lighting 7:18 PM
 Mincha 7:25 PM

Sat April 16, 2011 - 5th of Nisan
Acharei Mot - Shabbat HaGadol
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Mincha & Shabbat HaGadol Drasha 6:50 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 8:18 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 7:25 PM

Mon April 18, 2011 - 14th of Nisan
TA'ANIT BECHORIM
 Morning Services with Siyum 6:30 & 7:30 AM
 Latest time to eat Chametz 10:04 AM
 Latest time to burn Chametz 11:10 AM
 Candle Lighting 7:21 PM
 Mincha 7:25 PM
 Begin Seder after 8:10 PM

SAVE THE DATES

Beginners Chanukah Party
\$20 in advance, \$25 at the door
 Mon, Dec 6, 7:00 PM

Beginners Shabbaton - \$40
 Fri - Sat, Dec 3-4

Beginners Shabbat Luncheons - \$20
 Saturdays, 12:30 PM
 Jan 1, Feb 5

SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA
 Fri, March 4

Beginners Shmooze - Free
 Mon, March 7, 8:15 PM

Purim Party
\$20 in advance, \$25 at the door
 Thur, March 17, 8:30 PM