

Chanukah

Seeking Resilience

Rabba Sara Hurwitz - President and Co-Founder

On Chanukah, themes of light and darkness tend to get a lot of attention. As rabbis, educators and spiritual seekers, there's much to say about the Torah of light, which is so needed to penetrate the overwhelming darkness some of us feel today. And yet, this year, I found myself more interested in the menorah itself.

When I went back to the familiar section in the Gemara (Shabbat 21b) that discusses the miracle of finding the curse of oil, I noticed that a key piece of information was not there: When the Hashmonaim arrived in the Beit Hamikdash that had been desecrated by the Syrian Greek army, what was the *kli*, the vessel that they actually lit as part of the rededication ceremony?

We know what they did not light. The classic seven-armed golden Menorah that is described in detail in the Torah, had already been stolen by the Syrian Greeks. We also know that the Menorah was reconstructed, and the Gemara in Avoda Zara (43a) hints that the Hashmonaim used a Menorah fashioned out of wood. But, the Gemara goes on to explain that the goal was to cover it with richer materials. So, when the community could afford to beautify it, iron was added. Then it was covered with tin. "Then, when they grew richer, they fashioned it with silver. When they grew even richer, they fashioned it from gold."

העשירו עשאום של כסף חזרו והעשירו עשאום של זהב

The Menorah then is a symbol of resilience that is ever evolving. And so, when the Jewish people came back to the Beit Hamikdash, the fact that this wooden Menorah, that may have been wrapped in iron and tin and gold was still intact, is a miracle worth celebrating.

Resilience emerges from a strong foundation. And, the base, the menorah, was designed to evolve. It started off with wood, but it became a vessel with multi layers of materials, conveying an image of striving towards growth. The base, often overlooked, must also be evolving, strengthened and beautified.

Yes, it is the flames that captures our imagination. But the base, the strong and sturdy foundation is what holds us up. This year, ask yourself: What holds you steady? How can you nurture and nourish your foundation in order to help spurr your light and resilience this year? How can you evolve to achieve serenity and productivity? What is your inner foundation from which you can emerge to spread your light?

May it be a year of emerging from darkness towards stability.



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Rabba Sara Hurwitz, Co-Founder and President of Maharat, the first institution to ordain Orthodox women as clergy, also serves on the Rabbinic staff at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

Rabba Hurwitz completed Drisha's three-year Scholars Circle Program, an advanced intensive program of study for Jewish women training to become scholars, educators and community leaders. After another five years of study under the auspices of Rabbi Avi Weiss, she was ordained by Rabbi Weiss and Rabbi Daniel Sperber in 2009.

In 2013 Rabba Hurwitz was awarded the Hadassah Foundation Bernice S. Tannenbaum prize, and the Myrtle Wreath Award from the Southern New Jersey Region of Hadassah in 2014. In 2016 she was the Trailblazer Award Recipient at UJA Federation of New York. She was named as one of Jewish Week's 36 Under 36, the Forward50 most influential Jewish leaders, and Newsweek's 50 most influential rabbis. In 2017 Rabba Hurwitz was chosen to be a member of the inaugural class of Wexner Foundation Field Fellows.

She and husband, Josh Abraham, are parents to Yonah, Zacharya, Davidi and Natan.

