

Replace
FEAR
with
PURPOSE

For more than twenty centuries
Hanukkah has celebrated
the triumph of purpose
and hope over fear and despair.
And in these troubled times,
maintaining that perspective is
more important than ever.



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FROM THE MACCABEES' decision to fight on the Sabbath, to a rabbinic Judaism unrecognizable to Moses, to Maimonides whose works were initially scorned, to the first Hasidim who were branded as heretics, to the early Zionists who dared to believe that Jews could build a state of our own—

All responded to the need of the moment, rather than bemoan how the moment in which they lived would require a departure from what had been. Each found purpose, nurtured hope and discovered success when things looked rather hopeless.

Each took chances by departing from the past for the good of people, rather than limiting people for the good of the past. And in each case, they also created a future which kept the past alive. Hanukkah reconnects each of us to that tradition of sacred heresies fueled by hope, which drive out the fear and despair that can overtake us in difficult moments.



THE TALMUD teaches that “one who acts from love is greater than one who acts from fear” (BT Sot. 31a). So allow that love of what could be, rather than the fear of what is, to pervade your home and your spirit as you light the candles this year.

Give yourself the permission that our heroes from the past allowed themselves, and you may discover the inner strength to accomplish for yourself and others as much as they did. Like a small army, a few lone teachers, or a little jar of oil, it actually doesn't take much to help make big things happen.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE to make happen this year? Forget all the “good” reasons you can't. Just locate the desire and whatever you have within you to begin moving in that direction. In a century or two, you and your actions might appear on a card like this as people celebrate how you too changed the world for the better.

GETTING PAST OUR FEARS

is never easy, especially in difficult times. And the best responses usually require the kind of imagination which fear—especially fear about our vulnerability—constrains. It may be the vulnerability we experience in tough economic times, when enemies of the Jewish people loom large, or when trying to maintain relationships with friends and family whose actions disturb us.

IN EACH CASE, when we focus more on what we have than on what we've lost, on the strength we possess, and on the love which still binds us to those we love, new solutions emerge. That's what sacred heresies are.

JUDAH MACABEE and Theodore Herzl saw unimagined possibilities because they loved who they were more than they feared what they were not. And when we are that in touch with our hopes for the future and the love of those we hope will share it, we find strength in ourselves and in those who achieve those sacred heresies—heresies which assure the future of our families, our people and our world.

THIS HANUKKAH, gather as a family and take stock of the strengths you possess. Actually list them. Then consider a project in which you could all share that would use those strengths to help others.

Imagine declaring a moratorium on all projections of doom for the Jewish people. Instead ask yourself what challenges you are personally willing to help address.

Share an idea you have to strengthen our people or our nation—one that is as “crazy” as fighting on Shabbat or creating a modern Jewish state.

MAKE SURE THAT OTHERS APPRECIATE your motivation as much as your cause, and respect how frightening such new ideas can be. That's what makes these heresies both sacred and successful.

*“...One who acts from love
is greater than
one who acts from fear...”*

Babylonian Talmud
Sotah 31a

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*This resource has been created
to honor the memory of*

Leah Levitz Fishbane

*and her visionary work
to strengthen Jewish Life.*

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