

Friends, Happy Chanukah!

Since the Covid-19 pandemic entered our consciousness last year, we have gone through every major Jewish holiday aside from Chanukah and Purim. And at each one, we all labored to celebrate to the best of our abilities while following the health requirements.

And now, it's Chanukah.

In the last few days people have been reaching out, inquiring on how they could celebrate. Some needed supplies, others had questions regarding the laws, but most of all, it seemed like we were all wondering how to bring back that classic Chanukah feeling with everything going on.

There is no better holiday than Chanukah to give us the power to perform beyond our limitations. I know that this is said by each holiday, but now I'm serious (chuckle).

On Chanukah we celebrate our vaunted Jewish perseverance, a national treasure we inherited from the brave and saintly Maccabees.

Chanukah lights are meant to illuminate the darkness. We intentionally light them at night and set them up where they can see the street, using the light to combat the dark. And the Menorahs lights have lit the way for us throughout the darkness of our history, traveling with us to every exile we have endured.

Now we are faced with a challenge: a social distance, a palpable disconnect that we have all been thrown into. We are unsure how to celebrate, and how to make this Chanukah count.

Once again, the Chanukah lights whisper the answer: persevere. Light; light; light; no matter how dark it is around you. Spread warmth and a holy glow no matter how cold and unholy your environment might seem.

The Rebbe guided people to see stepping stones instead of stumbling blocks and motivating challenges instead of obstacles. How can we capitalize on this unprecedented moment to celebrate like never before?

Let's go back to 1990 for a minute.

As we will see in the video momentarily, Chabad arranged an international live celebration via satellite that Chanukah. This was a new technology and an unbelievable feat at the time, connecting Jewish communities in Melbourne, London, Hong Kong, Paris, and the newly reopened Jewish community in Moscow. All these locations were connected via satellite with each other and the two prime locations, The Kotel in Jerusalem and 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn NY.

The Rebbe participated in these events, sharing words of Torah and inspiration to thousands of viewers - after all, this was all due to the Rebbe's insistence on making use of technological advancements in the furtherance of proud Jewish observance and sentiment.

Today we might be confronted with challenges that seem to distance us from each other. Some may feel a bit down about this Chanukah, but here, in this virtual program that we are doing, we are switching this around and taking control of the narrative. We are announcing in Proud Chanukah fashion that WE have and will be using the gifts of technology that G-d has granted us, and we will use it to not only celebrate Chanukah this year, but to celebrate it with more people than ever before.

With the power of the Internet, Zoom, Facebook, Instagram, and even Tiktok - today, every person is essentially a global Influencer. Each of us has a power to spread light equal to COVID's power to spread sadness. We are all empowered to be superspreaders, spreading light and hope and encouragement to every corner of the world, triggering a pandemic of positive energy.

This Chanukah, let us follow the Maccabees into battle even though the darkness may seem too large to overcome. Let us follow the Lights and shine no matter the conditions we are in. Let us spread light to our friends and families through all the means that we have, through all the modern gifts of technology and through making sure each and every one has whatever they need - supplies, good spirits and big smiles, to have an unprecedentedly Happy Chanukah!