



## THE CONFIDENCE TO SHINE AND ILLUMINATE

Jim Collins in his book, *From Good to Great*, prescribes a number of secrets to corporate success. One of them, coined the Stockdale Paradox, is based on the life of Admiral Jim Stockdale who was the highest ranking United States military officer in the “Hanoi Hilton” prisoner-of-war camp during the height of the Vietnam War. As Collins tells the story, the secret to Stockdale’s survival of a brutal eight year imprisonment was that he both confronted the harsh reality of his daily situation and never relinquished the belief in his eventual freedom. In his interview with Collins, Stockdale explained, “I never lost faith in the end of the story. I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which, in retrospect, I would not trade.”

Finding the resources to succeed even when one’s resources are all spent is the defining characteristic of the Chanukah holiday. The miracle that we celebrate of one small vial of oil not being consumed is really the story of a fire that stayed lit without burning its fuel. In the Torah, this is presented as the outstanding characteristic of Hashem. God appears to Moshe in the *s’neh asher einenu ukal* (Exodus 3:2), as a fire in a bush that is not consumed, and responds to Moshe’s inquiry of God’s name by stating that “I will be that which I will be.” This introduction, which references an eternal state of being and becoming, runs parallel to the image of a live flame that does not need fuel in order to stay lit. Only such a fire, alive and flickering, can stay lit forever.

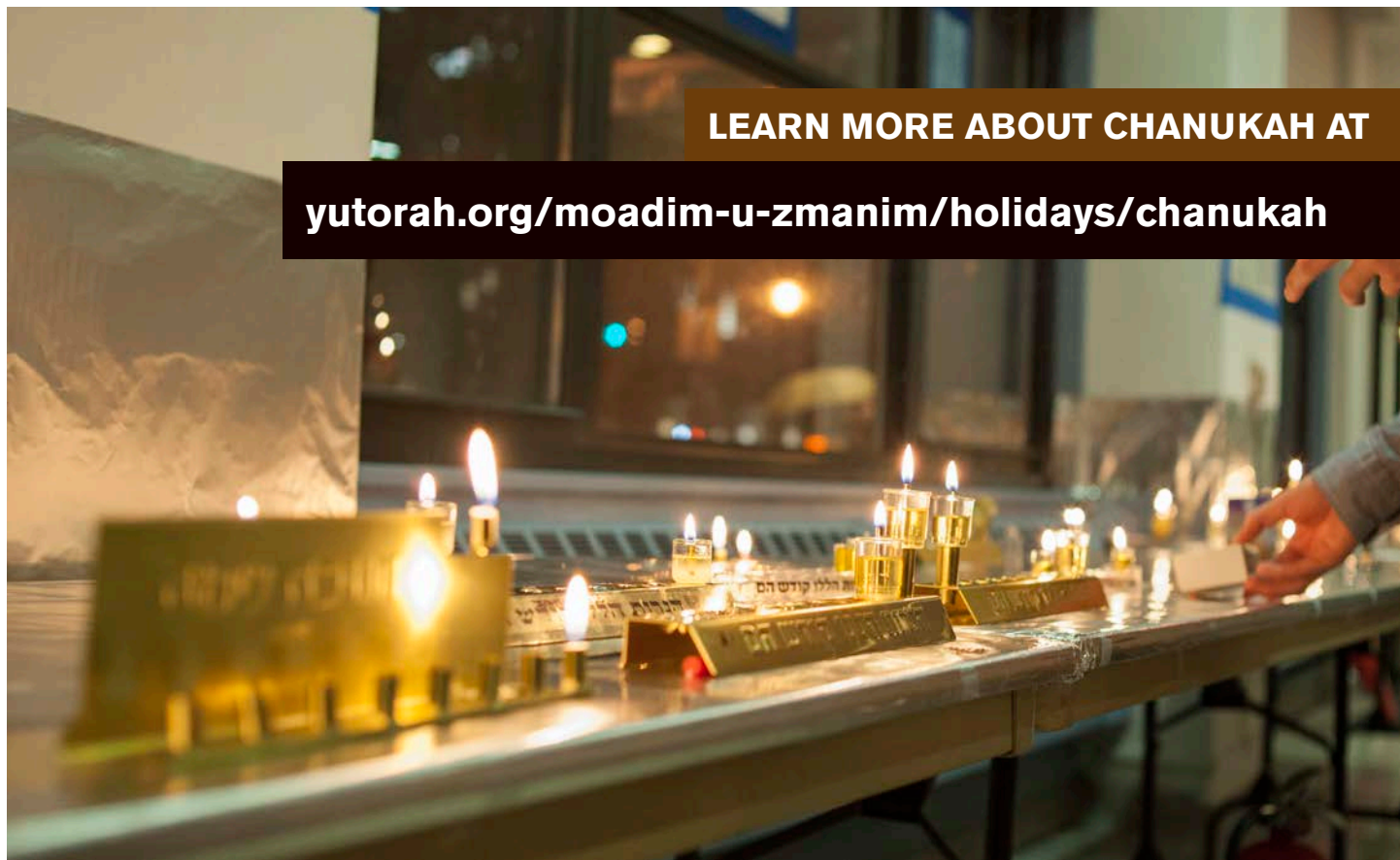
No doubt the message of the menorah flame that was not extinguished

represents Hashem’s presence during the time of the Macabean revolt. This is a continuation of a theme expressed poignantly by the prophet Zecharia when God instructs Zerubavel, the political leader at the beginning of the Second Temple period, that the menorah reminds us that it is “not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit” (see Zechariah 4:6). The Maccabees who might have fallen prey to the hubris of thinking that their ingenuity and strength alone won the war needed to hear that Hashem was present and supportive all throughout the dark winter periods of their subjugation and revolt.

This message potentially carries a second layer of meaning in the rabbinically mandated annual commemoration of this miracle to light a menorah in each of our homes. The enduring candle which is lit year

LEARN MORE ABOUT CHANUKAH AT

[yutorah.org/moadim-u-zmanim/holidays/chanukah](https://www.yutorah.org/moadim-u-zmanim/holidays/chanukah)



to year reflects that Hashem's eternal presence rests in our lives and homes as well. This in fact is the secret to our continuity and ever replenishing resources as a community and as individuals. For the recognition of the *tzelem Elokim*, divine spark, in each other enables us to form a sacred community that is more rich and holy. And when we recognize and develop what is distinct and divine within each of ourselves, then we can withstand all troubled times, even when it appears that our internal resources are depleted.

Over the past two years, people have been feeling depleted. Our emotional resources, through all of life's difficulties, might feel consumed. Chanukah is a reminder that even when we are spent, we still shine. "The fatal metaphor of progress, which means leaving things behind us," writes G.K. Chesterton, "has utterly obscured the real idea of growth, which means leaving things inside us." Progress is not about leaving the past behind, it is about developing a richer and more substantive interiority, where our very sense of self emerges more fully and wholly.

The belief in himself and his future is what gave Stockdale the strength to survive. Our belief in Hashem, ourselves and each other, messaged by the menorah, gives our community the confidence to shine and illuminate.

May our candles shine bright and light the way for our future redemption.



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Dr. Berman at <https://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-dr-ari-berman/>