

When the night is the shortest and the moon is darkest... that is when we light Hanukkah candles. I do not think it is a coincidence that the integration of the solar and lunar cycles gives us a winter solstice festival in which we emphasize light and bring in light, close to the waning of the moon.

Light and dark, waxing and waning, feel present to us now. As our President shared his heartfelt words, we are still on our own timelines of emotional 'waxing and waning', trying to find our footing but also slowly growing in our healing and our resilience. We are no longer who we were before October 7, and it is impossible to know what lies ahead. Each of us walks a unique path. Some of us have family and friends in the region, others do not. Like the waxing and waning of the moon, our relationship to Israel, to Judaism, to each other is in flux, and often cyclical, spiralling through the key moments of our lives.

Still, we know we can always come 'home'; to our collective home of the Jewish people and our

look to the Maccabees as testaments of strength and victory. But they too must have had doubts; they too picked up the broken pieces of their lives as they swept the shards off the sanctuary floor. They too must have wondered: now what?

The Hanukkah miracle may not be just about Divine Intervention (or dare I say: about Divine Intervention at all). I think it is a tale about not the miracles of God but the wonders of the human spirit. Resilience. Solidarity. Justice. Vision. Moral imagination. Hope. Each of the oil lamps on that ancient candelabra can be seen to represent those values. Each of them requires the fuel generated in the human heart. We are our own miracles.

While we are a synagogue affiliated with both the Reform and Conservative movements, I will bring in the thought of the founder of a third denomination, Reconstructionism. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan defined God as 'the power that makes for salvation.' Orienting his theology to the human spirit and to the civilizational project of Judaism, he brought a