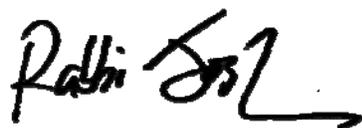


One week from this evening Jews around the world will light candles to welcome the first night of Hanukkah. And then, one week from tomorrow, on the first day of Hanukkah, Jews around the country will gather around the tables of family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving. We've all read about the bizarre calendrical confluence that brings these two holidays together for the first time in any of our lives – and possibly the last time in history (by the way at Torah study this coming Shabbat morning, we'll step out of our usual cycle of the week's portion to explain how this historic coincidence came about – wow your friends around the Thanksgiving table!) to create the marketing blitz that is [Thanksgivukkah](http://www.buzzfeed.com/christinebyrne/thanksgivukkah). (go to: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/christinebyrne/thanksgivukkah>)

But there may be more to the conjoining of these two holidays than a mere quirk of the calendar. Hanukkah, after all, celebrates the miraculous deliverance of the Jewish people at the hands of the Maccabees from Greek oppression; the rabbis tell us that the very purpose of lighting the *chanukiyah* for eight nights is “to express thanks, to praise [God’s] great name for your miracles, your wonders, and your deliverances.” Thanksgiving also has a foundational story based in overcoming long odds – to an improbable feast held by the Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony in 1621 to express their awe and thanks for what surely seemed a miraculous and life-sustaining harvest in a dangerous new land.

And so both holidays are an opportunity to thank God for miracles – big and small. Both holidays trace their origins to specific historical moments but both have become far more than that. Every day throughout Hanukkah a special reading is inserted in the amidah – specifically at the point in that prayer that thanks God for the miracles we experience in our lives on a daily basis, to make the point that the high moments in our lives should be framed in a larger context of gratitude and wonder. And many families use the Thanksgiving meal as a special opportunity to offer appreciation for the bounty and blessings we enjoy in our everyday lives, going around the table before eating to offer words of thanks and gratitude. I hope we can all use this Hanukkah *and* this Thanksgiving to reflect on the miracles whose blessings we enjoy – both those like the union of these two celebrations that come once in a lifetime, and those we are fortunate to experience each and every day.

Chag(im) Sameach(im),

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rabbi Sol". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.