

**Temple Israel**  
**Rabbi Adam B. Grossman**  
**“The Priceless Moments of Hanukkah”**  
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When I say the word priceless, it is difficult not to immediately think of the witty television commercials by MasterCard. The advertisements’ simple music, matter of fact narrator, and the concluding priceless truisms like “getting everyone together for dinner,” “your world in perfect harmony,” or “helping dad become a better man,” for even the most non-emotional can pull at our heart-strings. Yet, as soon as we realize there are “some things money cannot buy,” we are quickly reminded that MasterCard will be there -- just in case we need to purchase something. As those with credit card statements can attest, the purchasing power is definitely not “priceless.”

In our Torah portion this week, the text tells us of the *k'tonet passim*, the multi-colored coat, which Jacob gives to his prized son, Joseph. The generosity of Jacob to his son no doubt expresses the love he holds for him. However, with eleven other sons, this act of favoritism puts quite a price on Jacob’s affections such as the treachery enacted by his sons, the belief that his son, Joseph, was killed and the deterioration of the relationship between him and his other sons. While MasterCard might suggest that “priceless” is something money cannot buy, developed more fully, this idea dares us to look beyond the gifts we receive and into their ultimate worth.

With the start of Hanukkah, we are reminded of the Maccabian revolt and the reclaiming of our Jewish identity. In many households throughout the eight nights of the holiday, the giving of gifts plays an important role in the celebration. Kids eagerly await this time of the year for what could be better than eight glorious nights filled with gelt and gifts! Parents and grandparents look forward to providing their loved ones with gifts that will bring a smile to all faces involved. And for spouses and friends, this season gives them the opportunity to share a small token of appreciation with those who have been so instrumental in their lives. However, while giving is certainly an important Hanukkah tradition, the time is more than just an exchange of presents - so what makes Hanukkah priceless?

In researching this sermon for tonight, I could have immediately referenced our Jewish sources and commentators, but decided to glean knowledge from an entire new and extremely valuable source -- you. On Tuesday, I posed the question, "what makes Hanukkah priceless," online via Facebook and was impressed with the many deep and thoughtful responses from our community.

Some of them include Lesley Marks, who also gave me the zinger about credit cards not being priceless, stating that "being with family and celebrating together...is one of the things that makes it priceless!"

While Laurie Samuels shared, "It's definitely about the miracle..." Randee and David Manely commented "What about freedom, and empowerment. Hanukkah is about being all we can be, standing up for our rights, not giving up, and perseverance."

And Sally Rosenberg imparted a few beautiful metaphors including this one "Can you put a price on enLIGHTenment?," with the L-I-G-H-T capitalized, "SEEING is believing, and you can't see without the LIGHT. What could offer more at the darkest time of the year?"

Each of these people, alongside the many others who shared their opinions, remind us that Hanukkah and our other Jewish celebrations are more than an exchange of concrete things, but an exchange of very powerful connections to our Jewish identities.

In thinking about the comments shared online, there are many valuable presents that we can accept on Hanukkah. Just like Jacob's gift to Joseph, the gifts we exchange with each other most certainly have personal meaning, show our undying love, and provide excitement to the giver and the recipient. Yet, the value of Hanukkah transcends these tangible gifts. Instead, Hanukkah offers us "priceless" moments like coming together as a family and community, perseverance, the light of spiritual connection, and a chance to more fully connect with Judaism and our Temple.

So as we think about this Shabbat, this first night Hanukkah:

Manishevitz latke box – \$2.58

Sour cream and applesauce – \$2.12

Box of handmade Hanukah candles – \$6.99

Giving the lifelong treasure of Judaism – Priceless