

As Hanukkah's Candles, We Light up the Darkness

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you." Isaiah 60:1

I find no evidence that this passage was originally about Hanukkah. It's meant as a prophecy about Israel in the Millennial Age. But as I was contemplating the Hanukkah candles, this verse came to mind. Then as I read verses 2-3, I realized how much this really parallels the idea of the Hanukkah candles:

"See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn." Isaiah 60:2-3

I decided to take a closer look at this passage and some of the Hanukkah themes that it contains.

Verse 1: *"Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you."*

This reminds me that there is evidence that Yeshua was conceived during Hanukkah.

(See thewatchman.org/en/2006/11/when-was-messiah-born/.) He is our light who has come.

Verse 2: *"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people."*

This time of year especially, people are deceived by materialism and some of the pagan traditions that are still prominent at Christmas. There is a darkness over their understanding. And at least in the Northern Hemisphere, Hanukkah falls during literally the darkest time of year.

Verse 2 continues: *"But the LORD will arise over you, and His glory appears over you."*

This reminds us that followers of Yeshua are brought out of darkness and set apart to reflect his nature and shine the light of his glory.

Verse 3: *"The nations (some translate it Gentiles) shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."*

This speaks of how others *notice* that we are different and they are attracted by our light. In fact, the darker it gets the more our light stands out.

What is This Light?

In our lives this light is a metaphor. The Bible uses the word to mean:

- Truth
- Understanding
- Discernment
- Revelation

It also can refer to:

- Joy
- Confidence
- Providing direction ("A lamp unto my feet" Ps. 119:105).

And we know that the Bible repeatedly calls Yeshua "The Light of the World."

With that understanding, I decided to look at another aspect of these three verses. The words arise, risen, and rising appear repeatedly. Looking closer at how those words are used, I realized the difference between them is *who* is doing the rising:

Verse 1: *"Arise, shine; For your light has come! and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you."*

In verse 1, we are to do the arising and shining, because the Glory of the Lord has already risen over us.

Verse 2: “For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.”

In verse 2, it tells us the Lord will arise and His glory will be seen on us (future tense).

Verse 3: “The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”

In verse 3, it again refers to our rising.

What this is describing is a partnership. Because God’s glory has risen on us, we can arise and shine that light (verse 1). And as we arise and shine, God will rise (verse 2). It’s a perpetual cycle that requires our cooperation.

Shining Our Light

Now let’s revisit the meanings of the word light referenced earlier in view of this principle or partnership:

Light Typically Refers To

- Truth
- Understanding and Discernment
- Revelation
- Joy and Confidence
- Providing direction

In our Partnership with God, Arising and Shining our Light Means

- Speaking and living the truth
- Bringing understanding and discernment to others
- Sharing the revelation that we have been given
- Reflecting our joy and confidence in Yeshua
- Providing direction (a lamp) to those in darkness

We can shine this light because God’s light has already risen upon us – He’s already given us this light to shine, as it says in Verse 1. As we partner with Him in these things, God’s glory will be seen in us, and others will be attracted to that light (verses 2-3).

This concept is perfectly stated in Matthew 5:14-16:

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

As we light our Hanukkah candles each night, may it be a reminder that *we are the light of the world*. The candles represent us. We must light them and keep them lit by seeking God, obeying and following what He’s teaching us. We shine our light by our good works and acts of righteousness as others are looking on, then God uses them for His glory. We will glorify Him, and others will be drawn out of the darkness and to Him.

As Hanukkah’s Candles, You are the Light of the World

As I continued my research into the Hebrew words used in Isaiah 60:1, it gave me a deeper understanding into my true power as a light in the world.

In a literal Hebrew translation, Isaiah 60:1 reads: *“Arise-you! light-up-you! That he-came light-of you and glory-of Yahweh on you he-is-radiant.”*

The Hebrew seems to be a much stronger statement, especially the idea that Yahweh is radiant upon us. The original Hebrew word used here for “radiant” is “zarach” (Strong’s Hebrew word #2224.) It consists of three Hebrew letters -- Resh, Zayin, Chet. In the Ancient Hebrew, in which the characters each have their own meaning, the meaning of these three characters together would bring to mind a picture of destroying the main enclosure.

I wondered what destroying an enclosure would have to do with radiant. As I thought about it more, I realized it was about breaking away the obstacle that is hiding the light, getting rid of the container around the light, so that it can shine. It seemed the perfect picture of what happened in the story of Gideon.

Defeating the Enemy with Light

You may remember the story from Judges 7 – The Midianites had been oppressing the Israelites for seven years. So much so that the Israelites hid in caves and hid their crops underground, so that they could have enough left over after the Midianite raids of their homes and fields.

Gideon was the smallest man of the smallest clan of the smallest tribe of Israelites (the tribe of Menassah). God chose him to lead an Israelite army of 300 men to victory against the Midianites and the Amalekites – an absolutely supernatural victory!

You really have to read the whole story to appreciate God's faithfulness and character (see page 4). But for our context of God's radiance shining upon us, I'll highlight just a few verses.

Judges 7: 12, 16, 19, 21:

(12) "The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore....(16)Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, [Gideon] placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside...(19)Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands...(21)While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled."

This is a picture of "zarach," God's light radiating from his warriors. God instructed Gideon to arm his troops with trumpets and pitchers with torches inside. The light of the torches were enclosed by the pitchers, concealing the men in darkness. When they destroyed the pitchers enclosing the torches, that's when the battle was won.

These Israelites had no physical weapons, the trumpets, torches and pitchers are spiritual weapons only. Furthermore, both hands were occupied with the implements – this band was not preparing to defend themselves. They blew the trumpets, broke the pitchers and stood there. This is God's kind of battle – one that could never be won in physical terms, but demonstrates his glory and faithfulness to Israel beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Radiating God's Glory

Since when can 300 torches defeat countless warriors? When God's radiance is shining upon them. And that's the kind of light radiating from us! Radiating God's glory means destroying anything around our light that hinders it from shining. When we get rid of whatever obstacles are stopping us from fully shining God's light, His radiance through us can light up the darkness and send the enemy fleeing. That's what our Hanukkah candles represent.

Each night as you light your candles, let them be a reminder to keep your own spiritual fire lit on a daily basis through seeking God, obeying and following Him. Let them remind you to shine God's light by breaking the pitchers – destroying anything that hinders His light. You are the light of the world!

Matthew 5:14-16:

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Judges 7: Gideon's Valiant Three Hundred

¹ Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who *were* with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. ² And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' ³ Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained. ⁴ But the LORD said to Gideon, "The people *are* still *too* many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, *that* of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go." ⁵ So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink." ⁶ And the number of those who lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. ⁷ Then the LORD said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the *other* people go, every man to his place." ⁸ So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all *the rest of* Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. ⁹ It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. ¹⁰ But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, ¹¹ and you shall hear what they say; and after-ward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who *were* in the camp. ¹² **Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.** ¹³ And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, "I have had a dream: *To my surprise*, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and over-turned, and the tent collapsed." ¹⁴ Then his companion answered and said, "This *is* nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp." ¹⁵ And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand." ¹⁶ **Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers.** ¹⁷ And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: ¹⁸ When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, '*The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!*'" ¹⁹ **So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.** ²⁰ **Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"** ²¹ **And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled.** ²² **When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled** to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath. ²³ And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites. ²⁴ Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan." Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. ²⁵ And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.