



# LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE: STEPPING INTO THE SHAMASH ROLE

On each night of Hanukkah, we light candles, starting with one the first night and adding an additional candle each night until we reach the eighth and final night. We do not light the candles themselves, however; rather, we light a shamash. Usually found in the center of the menorah or at one end, the shamash lights the other candles before taking its place. *In that way, it lifts up the other candles, bringing them to wholeness and holiness.*

Each of us can be a shamash in our own lives, embodying the middah, or Jewish value, of *tikkun olam* — repairing the world and engaging in our responsibility to help uplift and heal our communities. But we must recognize that leadership is a service role; it does not necessarily mean being the best. Jewish tradition teaches us that Moses was chosen to be the leader of the Jewish people, not because of his leadership skills (he actually had a speech impediment) but because he was said to have cared about every sheep in his flock and each member of his tribe.



We no longer have a Moses to guide us, but we all have connections with others. And through those connections, we can create *kehillot kedoshim* — sacred communities — to help one another in times of distress.

*This Hanukkah, think about how you care for others and what it means to step into the shamash role as a leader.*





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## Activity: Becoming the Shamash

On Hanukkah, we use a special candle called the shamash to light the rest of the candles. Answer these questions for yourself, and identify how you can support others in your community.



**What is one special strength I have to offer my community? (If you struggle to think of a strength, ask yourself what you frequently get thanked for.)**



**What's one time I used compassion or empathy this past month?**



**Choose one person: How can you lift them up or support them in something they care about?**



**What is one way I can search for the good in others?**



**What's one thing I can do to be inclusive and invite others?**



**What's one issue facing my community that I'd like to get involved with?**



**What's one resource I can share with others?**



**What's one thing I can do this week to make someone feel celebrated?**