

UPF International: Celebrating Hanukkah - Lights That Bind Us

Tageldin Hamad
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[Hanukkah](#) begins at sundown on December 14 and concludes at nightfall on December 22, 2025. Rooted in Jewish history and faith, the festival commemorates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, and is marked by the lighting of the menorah with its nine candles, each flame a testament to perseverance, memory, and the enduring conviction that light can overcome darkness.

While deeply particular in its origins, Hanukkah carries a universal resonance. Across cultures and traditions, the symbolism of light affirms hope in the face of adversity and the moral responsibility to uphold human dignity. In this sense, Hanukkah speaks not only to the Jewish people, but to all who seek freedom, justice, and peace.

This year, Hanukkah is observed shortly after [Human Rights Day](#) on December 10, and during [International Human Solidarity Day](#) on December 20. This convergence invites reflection on the shared ethical foundations that undergird both religious tradition and international norms. The legacy of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), affirming that human dignity is the basis of freedom, justice, and peace, finds a natural echo in Hanukkah's message of resilience and moral courage.

The Universal Peace Federation ([UPF](#)), founded in 2005 by [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) and the late [Rev. Sun Myung Moon](#), is guided by principles of interdependence, mutual prosperity, and universally shared values. These principles align closely with the spirit of Hanukkah: the protection of identity, the defense of conscience, and the responsibility to act for the common good.

For more than two decades, UPF has maintained sustained engagement in the Middle East through the [Middle East Peace Initiative](#), fostering dialogue and trust through civil society diplomacy, fact-finding visits, interfaith encounters, and conferences that bring together religious leaders, parliamentarians, academics, women leaders, youth, and community representatives from Israel, the State of Palestine, and Jordan.

Women leaders have played a central role in these peacebuilding efforts, notably the 2004 [Women of Peace](#) mission, which convened 500 women leaders from over 40 nations in dialogue with Israeli and Palestinian counterparts. More recently, UPF-Israel's [Peace Sukkah](#) gathering, held in Jerusalem on October 8, 2025, at the Har El Synagogue, offered an interfaith space dedicated to mutual respect and the pursuit of peace.

Such initiatives resonate with the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal [16](#): to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, ensure access to justice, and build accountable and inclusive institutions. They also reflect the broader multilateral focus on peace and inclusion that characterizes December, including [United Nations deliberations on leadership](#), solidarity, and peacebuilding.

Hanukkah further invites reflection on the family as the first school of values, where respect, self-discipline, forgiveness, and service are learned and practiced. In an address delivered in New York on August 18, 2000, at a forum associated with the United Nations, the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon emphasized that effective multilateral cooperation is strengthened when complemented by moral and spiritual wisdom, including the constructive contribution of faith leaders.

In this season of light, UPF expresses solidarity with the Jewish community, with other faith communities, and with all people of good will. We encourage [UPF Ambassadors for Peace](#), partners in government and civil society, youth, and religious leaders to deepen dialogue and cooperation, recognizing that peace is built patiently, relationship by relationship, through shared ethical commitment.

May the lights of Hanukkah inspire renewed dedication to dignity, understanding, and hope, so that humanity may continue its journey toward peace as one human family under God.



DR. HAK JA HAN MOON

Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, widow of the Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon [1920-2012], is the co-founder of the Universal Peace Federation. Together with her husband, she has devoted her life to peace, founding many organizations and initiatives in a wide range of fields.

Childhood and Family Life



Hak Ja Han was born in the village of Sinli in the Anju District, now in North Korea, on January 6 (lunar), 1943. Her mother, Mrs. Hong, was an earnest Christian and her father was a disciple of a famous preacher, Rev. Young Do Lee. The North Korean Communists persecuted their family, and in 1948, when Dr. Moon was five years old, she and her mother were arrested by Communist police and jailed for 11 days.

After their release, Hak Ja Han, her mother, and her grandmother fled their village in the middle of the night. They went to Taegu, where they lived through the Korean War and where she was reared in a religious environment.

The family later moved to Choon Chun, where Hak Ja Han's uncle was living, and she soon graduated from elementary school in that city. During this period, she, along with her mother, joined the newly formed Unification Church. Five years after joining, on April 11, 1960, the young Hak Ja Han married the church's founder, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. She stands as co-founder of the Unification Church, now known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. Since the passing of her husband, she has taken full responsibility for the affairs of the worldwide movement she has established along with her husband.

Devoted Wife, Mother, and Grandmother



Dr. Moon is a devoted wife, the mother of 14 children and the grandmother of more than 40 grandchildren. She is known for her extraordinary compassion, capability, grace and charm. Above all, she is exemplary as a woman who has created a God-centered marriage and family of three generations.

Leadership to Strengthen Families

The heart and soul of Rev. and Mrs. Moon's lifelong ministry is the re-establishment of God's ideal of the family as the foundation for harmonious societies and the cornerstone of world peace. The Marriage Blessing movement, which began with the marriage of three couples in 1960, has reached millions of couples worldwide. Dr. Moon and her husband presided over the marriage blessings in Washington, DC's RFK stadium in 1997, in Madison Square Garden in 1998, and in Seoul's Olympic Stadium and other venues in successive years ever since.

[Right: Marriage Blessing at RFK Stadium, Washington, DC]



A Woman of International Peace and Good Will

In 1968, the Rev. Moon established the Professors World Peace Academy in Korea, and in 1972 the first International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences was held. These and similar organizations have attracted the participation of scholars, scientists, and leaders in the fields of religion, the media, government, and the arts, including numerous Nobel Laureates. Dr. Moon played a crucial role in all of these developments, where her compassionate friendship complements her husband's challenging vision.

Through addressing informal gatherings of women at these activities, Dr. Moon began to make her appearance in the public sphere. Her speeches included the Address to the Women of the World Media Conference (October 1981) and the Address to the Women of the International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (November 1981). She moved forward on the world stage for the promotion of God-centered values in 1989 when the Soviet media interviewed her. Her interview appeared in the Religion and Society section of Za Ruhezhom (June 12, 1989).

Meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and President Kim Il Sung in North Korea



The following year, Rev. and Mrs. Moon met with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. This extraordinary event, which took place in the Kremlin on their 30th wedding anniversary, April 11, 1990, initiated an educational exchange, which has been developing ever since.

Then, in December of 1991, Dr. Moon put her life on the line when she and her husband traveled to North Korea to meet with President Kim Il Sung for the purpose of uniting the two Koreas. That meeting has led to ongoing projects to facilitate the peaceful union of the North and South Korea.

International President of the Women's Federation for World Peace

In 1992, Dr. Moon, together with her husband, founded the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP). Dr. Moon is the International Chairwoman. She invested all her energy into developing a global base for the new organization, giving the Federation's inaugural speech in 113 cities in 12 countries and in three different languages within an eight-month period.



[Above left: Dr. Moon speaks in the Tokyo Dome and right: United Nations.]

In July of 1993, after speaking throughout America, Dr. Moon's tour culminated with addresses on the US Capitol Hill and at the United Nations, delivering a message of peace and interreligious reconciliation.

Universal Peace Federation: Leading the Way for Peace, Development and the Renewal of the United Nations



Dr. Moon, following in her late husband's footsteps, is proposing a revitalized, renewed United Nations with the help of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), with more than 50,000 diplomats, clergy, civic leaders, current and former heads of state appointed as Ambassadors for Peace. Among the prominent initiatives of the UPF is the Middle East Peace Initiative. Thousands of religious leaders have journeyed to Israel and Palestine to urge the children of Abraham to unite in peace. UPF has also been active in disaster relief after Hurricane Katrina struck the US in 2005 and the tsunami that struck northern Japan in 2011. Its educational programs combat the spread of HIV/AIDS and encourage youth to work for peace through sports and community service.

Following the inauguration of UPF in 2005, Dr. Moon accompanied her husband on a historic world tour to 100 international cities in 100 days. The following year she led a 120-city world speaking tour accompanied by their children, their spouses and their adult grandchildren and spouses who also served as speakers.

After her husband's passing, Dr. Moon has taken over the leadership of the organizations she and her husband founded.



Universal Peace Federation

Universal Peace Federation is an NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

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