

UNEDITED INTERNET VERSION

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# Chanukah Talks

Collection of Drashas from the  
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<http://bilvavi.net/sugya/chanukah>



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## 1 | *The Greek Perspective*<sup>1</sup>

The *Nefesh HaChaim* (Gate IV: Chapter 1) writes that as the generations continued, the *yetzer hora* devised ways to fight *Klal Yisrael's* study of Torah, and thus the idea formed of learning Torah for the sake of *pilpul* (give-and-take analysis) alone, with no involvement of *yirah* (fear of Hashem).

The *yetzer hora* fights our power of Torah study, and so did the Greek exile fight the Torah. Greek wisdom and philosophy was at war with the wisdom of the Torah.

Our Sages viewed Greek wisdom as being a wisdom that is entirely focused on the physical body and nature, with no trace of spirituality to it. There was also another way of understanding the difference between the Torah's wisdom and Greek wisdom. Greek wisdom is entirely intellectual-based, with no mention of the "heart". Regarding the Torah, "*fear of Hashem is wisdom*", the Torah is a wisdom that requires fear of Hashem, whereas Greek wisdom is intellect alone.

When the *Nefesh HaChaim* says that the *yetzer hora* devised ways to fight against *Klal Yisrael's* study of Torah, it is referring to the evil force of impurity that is "*Yavan*" (the Greek exile and its philosophy). When a person learns Torah, he is definitely not learning a wisdom that is focused on the physical body and nature, but it's possible that he has Greek attitude towards the wisdom of Torah! In fact, he might have the exact thinking of Greek philosophy even as he's learning Torah.

The *yetzer hora* has many different ways of how it fights *Klal Yisrael*. Sometimes it causes some people in *Klal Yisrael* to abandon Torah study by causing them to engage in the study of nature and the body. Another way it fights *Klal Yisrael* is through removing "*yirah*" (fear of Hashem) from the picture, where the fiery love for Torah is extinguished in their hearts.

The depth of this struggle throughout the generations, and in our generation especially, is that the Greek attitude has penetrated into the "tents of *Shem*" (the *beis midrash*), in the sense that a person today can be sitting and learning Torah in the *beis midrash* yet he has a 'Greek perspective' within his very learning. To an onlooker, it would seem that there is no difference between a person learning with a Greek perspective with a person who doesn't. The difference cannot be discerned by the eye.

Those who study other wisdoms outside of the Torah, such as those who study nature and the body, are an obvious example of Greek influence. But even someone who merits to sit and learn in the *beis midrash* might be affected by the same problem: his Torah learning has become exiled by the evil inclination, whose purpose is to fight against the Torah.

When a person does not clarify to himself what his connection to Torah is [as we have begun to explain in the previous chapters], he might find out after 120 years when he goes up to Heaven that all of his Torah learning was with a Greek perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/nefesh-hachaim-gate-4-004-greek-perspective>

There is a story told by Rav Shalom Shwadron of his grandfather, the *Maharsham*, which can make anyone shudder. The *Maharsham* fell ill, and he dreamt that he ascended to Heaven, where he stood in front of the Heavenly Court. They weighed out his merits and his sins. An announcement went out in praise of the *Maharsham's* merits of Torah learning and how awesome it was. Then an angel came and declared that all of his Torah is not called "Torah"; it came and blew into his mouth, and all of the words of Torah were removed from him, as if the words had never been there before! It was all removed from him. In the end, the angel returned all the words of Torah to the *Maharsham*, for it said, "In the generation you live in, your words of Torah can be called 'Torah'."

Anyone familiar with the works of the *Maharsham* knows that his Torah is awesome. He was one of the greatest leaders of his generation and you can see his greatness in his *sefarim*. Yet the *Maharsham* testified about himself that in the Heavenly Court, they instantly removed all his Torah.

If someone searches for truth and he hears the above story, how can he not suspect that the same thing can happen to him? Of course, in the end of the story, the angel considered the *Maharsham's* Torah to be Torah. But it is still shuddering to think that there was even such a possibility. How could such a thing be possible? We aren't discussing here a great person such as the *Maharsham*. We are talking about someone on our own spiritual level. How is it possible that a person's Torah is not considered to be real "Torah" in Heaven...?

If a person never clarified his connection to Torah – the external layer of the connection, and certainly the inner layer of the connection – he might think that he has love for Torah and that he learns a lot, but he might have a very mistaken attitude towards learning, for he has never clarified what connects him to Torah.

This is true even if he has learned much Torah both in quantity and quality; with understanding; with clarity; with *chiddushim*; with knowing the *Halachic* conclusions of each *sugya* (each on his own level); if he has not clarified the refined points of what connects him to the Torah he learns, then there is only a minimal connection to Torah he has (based on one of the qualities above), and he is missing much of what is required in a connection to Torah.

A person doesn't know what's missing from his learning, because he never makes this reflection. He thinks that everything's great simply because he is sitting and learning Torah from morning to night; after all, he merits understanding in his learning, he even has *chiddushim*, he has clarity in what he is learning, he is becoming knowledgeable in Torah – each person can say this on his own level.

Yet the story of the *Maharsham* proves that one's Torah learning is considered to be like nothing in Heaven. This is when one doesn't clarify what is connecting him to Torah and he isn't aware of what deeply connects him to it.

One who clarifies what connects him to his Torah learning is aware of what exactly connects him to the Torah and which parts he isn't yet connected to. He is aware of which areas in his learning are weak, which areas need improvement, which parts he needs to decrease and which parts he needs to increase, which parts he needs more connection to. One must honestly examine himself and take

apart his connection to Torah and see which parts he is connected to and which parts are missing from his connection.

When a person ascends to Heaven after 120, the first question he is asked is, “Did you set aside times for Torah study?” That will be the first part of the examination. But after this the question will go deeper: During the times he learned Torah, on what level did he learn it on? How deep was his connection to it?

We must know that we can’t run away from this examination. Either a person clarifies it as he is here on this world, or it is told to him when he gets to the World of Truth – where it will be too late to do anything.

Obviously, anyone who is sitting and learning Torah all day in the *beis midrash* is someone who wants to make progress in his Torah learning. But one must be aware of which parts are necessary in the connection to Torah learning. Through this, one’s connection to Torah will grow deeper and it will have more quality to it.

The evil spiritual force known as ‘*kelipas Yavan*’, the “Greek perspective”, is essentially the attitude that a person can learn Torah in a superficial manner, where he thinks that he is gaining wisdom and that he is understanding it, and the person thinks that everything here is fine. But with this attitude towards learning, a person will come upstairs after 120 and it will be shown to him that his entire way of life was spent incorrectly; that instead of being of those who sat in the *beis midrash*, he was considered to be of those who pursue other places, *chas v’shalom*. Although he did not actually run after frivolous things during his lifetime, he will be shown that his perspective is that not that far from those who do not consider Torah to be the main pursuit of life.

To emphasize again, each person will have to undergo this assessment of his Torah learning. The only question is if it will happen during a person’s lifetime - when he uses his free will to do so - or if it will be made in Heaven, where it will be too late. A person on this world has the free will to choose to make this examination on himself: To see how much he is exerting himself in Torah, how connected he is to Torah, how much clarity he has in his learning, etc.

If a person does not make this reflection, he will simply live a carefree life, thinking that all is well and that he just has to keep increasing his time for learning and that he should simply keep exerting himself more and more. Although this is also true, a person must not think that this is all he needs in his connection to Torah. There is much more to the connection to Torah that a person needs, and every person will have to see it at some point; whether on this world, or on the next.

If a person didn’t assess his connection to Torah on this world, he will be shown in the next world all that he was supposed to reach – which was a simple truth that he could have reached even as he lived on this world. If one realizes as he is on this world that improvement is needed in his connection to Torah learning, then he has a chance of changing, because he still has free will. But if a person waits until the next world to see the truth, there, it is too late to do anything, and there he will remain with his very minimal level of connection to Torah.



The *Nefesh HaChaim* explains that the study of *mussar* began because the great leaders were seeing that much was missing from their Torah learning. The *Nefesh HaChaim* calls them the ‘eyes of the congregation.’ In other words, these great people had the ‘eyes’ to see what was missing. They had a spiritual lens that could see beyond the external layer of things.

When a person sees the world through a superficial lens, he does not see what the problems are. He walks into a *beis midrash* full of people learning Torah, and he might feel, “Ah, “praiseworthy are the eyes that have seen this.” But if he would have more inner vision, he would instantly see what is missing from the *beis midrash*. (To see and fix the problem, though, he would have to be on a very high spiritual level).

The *Nefesh HaChaim* says that the leaders of the generation who founded the study of *mussar* were the ‘eyes of the congregation.’ They had ‘eyes’ that could see things which others couldn’t see. They could see subtleties; they possessed the discerning eye of a Torah scholar, who sees beyond the superficial layer of things.

In recent generations, there has been a great increase of Torah study. But those with inner vision can see that a deep connection to Torah is missing, and they see a whole different reality than how others see it. The leaders of the generation, who are called ‘eyes of the generation’, see this painful reality. But each person on his own level can gain some inner vision and he can sense that there is much that is missing from his connection to Torah.



The *Nefesh HaChaim* continues that those who noticed what was missing from Torah study wrote *sefarim* that explain *yirah* (fear of Hashem) to redirect the hearts of the nation, so that they could rededicate themselves to the study of Torah and to serving Hashem, with pure fear of Heaven.

A superficial reading of these words of the *Nefesh HaChaim* seems to imply that they realized that their Torah learning was causing them to be lacking in *yirah* and in *avodas Hashem*, thus the leaders of the past wrote *sefarim* that explain *yirah*, in order to gain back their *yirah*.

However, that is not what he writes. The *Nefesh HaChaim* is saying [in conjunction with the earlier paragraphs] that because their Torah learning was lacking in *yirah*, because it was lacking with a “burning love for Torah” as he puts it, they felt that their very Torah learning was lacking. [Thus they weren’t just missing *yirah*; they were missing Torah, because they were missing *yirah* in their Torah].

Thus, when they wrote *sefarim* about *yirah*, they didn’t do this just so they could gain *yirah*; they did it so that their Torah learning could become improved in this way. For it is written, “Fear of G-d is wisdom.”



They didn’t want to just improve their fear of Heaven; they wanted to gain back a fiery love for Torah which had gone missing from them.



From a superficial perspective, it appears to be that *mussar sefarim* are here to explain to us merely how to better our actions, how to improve our *middos*, how to improve ourselves, etc. This is all true, but there is a much deeper purpose of the *mussar sefarim*. It is because “*Fear of G-d is wisdom.*” When a person learns *mussar* in the true way, not superficially but with in-depth analysis, he reveals a deeper connection to Hashem and to Torah. He gains a clearer perspective on life, thus the way he relates to Hashem and to his Torah learning becomes totally different.

This is apparent from the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, that the reason why the leaders wrote *mussar sefarim* was “to straighten out... and fix the breaches” that had been made. They were trying to help us become more precise and exact in our way of living. They were trying to fix the ‘breaches’, reminiscent of the ‘13 breaches’ which the Greeks had made in the *Beis HaMikdash*, which symbolizes the negative Greek influences on our Torah learning. Thus the purpose of the study of *mussar* was essentially so that we would clarify our connection to our Torah learning and form a deep connection to Torah; to get it back to the way it used to be before all the breaches came along.



The *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that any sensible person understands that those who founded the study of *mussar* never intended for people to abandon Torah study and to learn *mussar* all day. Their entire intention was so that people would improve their Torah learning and learn Torah all day; to learn the Written Torah, the Oral Torah, and the many *halachos* of the Torah. They just wanted people to add learn it with fear of Heaven.

How indeed did people then come to make such a mistake? It was because people thought that the study of *mussar*/*yirah* was solely for the sake of knowing what *yirah* is and what *avodas* Hashem is. That is how they came to neglect Torah study and to instead involve themselves with only *mussar*.

The true perspective is that the *mussar sefarim*, which explain how to have *yirah*, are really coming to explain our connection to Hashem, and precisely through the study of His Torah. The study of *yirah* was not meant to imply that people should stop learning Torah in favor of learning about *yirah*; for the whole purpose of *yirah* was to deepen our connection to the study of Torah. “*Fear of Hashem is wisdom*” – the purpose of studying about *yirah* was to reconnect us to the subtle and refined wisdom of the Torah.

This explains the difference between those who serve Hashem superficially with those who really serve Him. Those who truly serve Hashem are people who use all of their spirituality to deepen their connection to Torah learning, more and more. By contrast, someone who improves his ‘*Avodas Hashem*’ without being focused on improving his Torah learning, will slowly drift off from Torah study, preferring instead to spend most of his time in the study of *mussar* and *yirah*. He erroneously thinks that only in that area can he feel a burning love for Torah.

When a person understands what Torah is all about and what *mussar* is about, he understands that *mussar* is coming to explain the subtleties of the Torah’s wisdom, and that this what ultimately connects a person to Hashem and His Torah. When this is the perspective, a person understands that the study of *mussar* is not meant to weaken our study of Torah; it is rather the ingredient that

helps our Torah learning thrive. The study of mussar comes to analyze the subtleties of the human soul, which in turn helps our connection to Torah to be more precise and exact.



May Hashem give us the strength that *kelipas Yavan* (the Greek perspective) should be erased from the world in general, and on a specific level, from those who sit here in the *beis midrash*; that our Torah learning should not be a mere superficial and purely intellectual kind of study that resembles the study of Greek wisdoms. Rather, we should have a connection to our Torah learning which should stem from both the use of our mind and heart. Our minds should be heavily immersed in Torah, and our hearts need to burn with fiery love for it. Then our Torah learning can resemble the Menorah in its purity, in which the flame would rise on its own after it was lit; our souls should become enflamed with a burning love for Torah and thereby become exalted, going higher and higher.

## 2 | *The Light of Emunah*<sup>2</sup>

Chanukah was essentially a war between the *chochmah*\wisdom of the holy Torah (which is called “*Torah Ohr*”, the Torah of light) vs. the wisdom of the Greeks. However, it was a different kind of war than the other wars fought.

It wasn’t just about defeating and getting rid of our enemies. It was about taking their evil and sanctifying it.

The Greek nation (*Yavan*) descended from *Yefes*, the son of *Noach*. *Yefes* was blessed by his father that he would receive beauty; our Sages said that “the beauty of *Yefes* should join the tents of *Shem*”,<sup>3</sup> and the Sages also said that “Believe that there is wisdom found among the nations”,<sup>4</sup> and this is referring in particular to the wisdom of the Greeks, for they are the root of all secular wisdoms.

The depth of the above statement of Chazal is that when we “believe” that the Greeks do contain wisdom, this is how we sanctify the Greek essence; in other words, we are supposed to believe that the secular nations contain wisdom, but we must not go learn their wisdom. The fact that the Sages said that “Wisdom is found among the nations” does not mean, *chas v’shalom*, that we can be permitted to study their wisdom. We can *believe* that they have wisdom, but that does not permit us to go and study their wisdoms. Thus, the Sages were careful to say only that we can *believe* that there is wisdom among the nations; they did not tell us to *learn* of their secular wisdom.<sup>5</sup>

The spiritual light of *chochmah*\wisdom has fallen [into the Side of Evil], and that is why the secular nations possess wisdom. The way we rectify this fallen light is through using our power of *emunah* - in this case, to “believe” – to *believe* that they have wisdom, precisely *without* engaging in the study of their wisdom.

This is how we bring light into the “Greek darkness” [and thus rectify it]. The Greeks are referred to as “darkness”.

It is written, “*Your faith at nights*.”<sup>6</sup> Darkness is precisely the time in which we are meant to bring in the light of *Emunah*\faith in Hashem.

This is the inner reason behind why the Menorah is lit only after it is dark. The light of the Menorah is a different kind of light – it does not resemble sunlight; rather, it represents the light of Hashem which is present with us even as we are in darkness. As it is written, “*As I sit in darkness*,

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-000-light-emunah>

Adapted From Introduction to *Sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh on Chanukah*

<sup>3</sup> Megillah 9b

<sup>4</sup> Eichah Rabbah 2:13

<sup>5</sup> See Tefillah #042- *What It Means To Have Good Middos and Tefillah #094-Seeking Advice* ; see also the derasha “*Avoiding The Secular Influence*”.

<sup>6</sup> Tehillim 92:3

*Hashem is a light unto me.*<sup>7</sup> The “light of Hashem” is when we have *emunah* \faith in Him; this is also known as the “light of *emunah*.”

It was the spiritual light of the holy Torah that defeated the Greeks, and that light was essentially being empowered by the light of *emunah*.

The eight lights of the Menorah symbolize the level above seven. *Chochmah* \Wisdom is in the dimension of seven, while *emunah* is the dimension that is higher than *Chochmah* \wisdom, for *emunah* is really the source that all wisdom is drawn from; as it is written, “Wisdom is found in *ayin* (nothingness)” [and *ayin* refers to *emunah*].

The *halachah* is that the Menorah is lit outside and not inside, because the Menorah is an “*Ohr Makif*” (a “surrounding spiritual light”), as opposed to being an *Ohr Penimi* (“internal spiritual light”), because the lights of the Menorah represent the light of *emunah*, and *emunah* is not just a light that radiates inwardly; it shines outward.

For this reason, there are some opinions in our Sages that Chanukah will not cease in the future, based on the concept that “The purpose of knowledge is to know that we do not know” – in other words, *emunah* is the purpose of all *Chochmah* \wisdom. This is also known as the light of the redemption: the light of *emunah*.

The other festivals, by contrast, are all within the dimension of *Chochmah* \wisdom, therefore they will all cease in the future [because in the future there will be no need for *Chochmah*]; whereas Chanukah and Purim are the festivals that are within the higher dimension, *emunah* – which is above all *Chochmah* – and that is why these two festivals will not cease in the future.

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<sup>7</sup> *Michah* 7:8

### 3 | *Chanukah- Winning The War By Remaining Eternal*<sup>8</sup>

#### *Viewing The Imminent Festival As A Continuation Of Our Avodah*

In the previous chapters (of the series of [Reaching Your Essence](#)), we discussed at length the ways of how to reveal the *Yechidah* in the soul.

It is the nature of most of us that when a Jewish holiday approaches, we like to learn about the nature of the upcoming holiday, but we tend to put aside our current *avodah* in favor of learning about the holiday at hand.

But we can compare this to one who owns a horse for 20 years and he wishes to give it as a wedding present to his son. The wedding day of his son arrives, and he gets very busy with the wedding preparations, and what happens? He doesn't watch his horse, and the horse runs away.

The lesson from this parable is very clear. If we leave put our *avodah* on hold because we need to learn about the holiday, then our *avodah* will be ignored in favor of learning about the holiday, and then we lose the previous gains of our *avodah* until now.

However, the other option is not either good: if a person ignores the holiday and only focuses on his *avodah*, then this too is detrimental, because if Hashem gives us a holiday, obviously it is His will that we involve ourselves in it.

When a Jewish holiday comes our way as we are in middle of explaining a certain *avodah*, we thus need to see it as a continuation of our own current *avodah*, rather than just see it as a coincidence that happens to fall out in middle of our *avodah*. Therefore, the current holiday that is approaching [in our case, Chanukah] must be viewed by us as a continuation of our current *avodah* of revealing our "*Yechidah*".

What, essentially, is a Jewish festival all about? The *Yomim Tovim* (Jewish festivals) are really windows that help us see into the inner world of spirituality. The inner world is covered over, but it is not completely covered over; there are windows which we can use to see into it. Each festival offers us the opportunity to access a new window that gives us new perspectives about the inner world.

If we look into a house through many of its windows and we see the same room, we are seeing the same room each time, just through different windows. The festivals are each different windows that look at the same room. Chanukah is one window, and Purim is another window, and Pesach is another window. But they are all windows to the same view. We aren't revealing new realities through each of the festivals – rather, we can keep learning to see the same reality that exists through different angles, with each festival that we go through.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/reaching-your-essence-010-utilizing-power-peace> Adapted from 010 Da Es Havaysecha

## *The Lesson of Chanukah – Another Way To Access The View of the Yechidah*

The holiday approaching us now is Chanukah, and if we are currently learning about how to reveal our *Yechidah*, this is not a coincidence. It must be that Chanukah adds on another important dimension to this avodah of trying to uncover our *Yechidah*.

Chanukah is therefore another way for us to learn about how we can view the inner world. Let us reflect, therefore, into how we can reveal our *Yechidah* through understanding about Chanukah.

### *Real Victory*

On Chanukah, there was a war between the Greeks and the *Chashmonaim* (Jews who descended from royalty). This was a miracle that defied nature; the Greek were very mighty, but a handful of Jews slew them all in a miraculous defeat. How did they succeed in overcoming nature? We will try to explain this with an inner perspective.

When we are in war, how can we win? How do we overcome the opposition? A simple war, like we see from the world, is when two sides are warring with each other, and might is pitted against might. There were many such wars in history.

However, the Ramban writes that the ideal situation to fight a war is to first try to make peace with the other side. If peace isn't achieved, the side who is trying to make peace may then go to war with the other side. It sounds simply that the problem of war can be solved with placating the other side, such as if we offer the other side a lot of money. But there is a deeper reason. It is because when there is fighting, we need to access the power of *shalom* (peace) in the soul.

Logic dictates the opposite: logic says that if you remain peaceful and docile, the other side will fight you. How can peace win our wars for us?! Why does the Ramban say that we should first try peace in order to win the war?!

If a person is deeply connected to the power of peace in the soul, that affects his outside as well, so inner peace can cause peace upon the world. That is more understandable. But if one hasn't reached his inner peace, how can behaving with peace be a possible way to win a war?!

The truth is that real peace will only be in the future. It is written of the future, "*The wolf and the lamb shall walk together.*" Then there will be no more wars, because we will all become one unit. It really doesn't make sense that peace should win our wars. Only in the future will this concept make sense, because the future will be the revelation of the innermost point of the soul, the all-inclusive point, which does not allow for any contradictions, oppositions, or war. The fact that there will be peace in the future will not be a coincidence. The future peace will be the revelation of our essence. It will be revealed that there are no oppositions. Thus, it automatically follows that there will be no wars.

War is only possible when there is a concept of separation and disparity in the world; currently, we look at ourselves as having many divided “parts” to our self, which reflects the concept that in the current era, there is disparity. In the future, when the all-inclusive point of the *Yechidah* will be revealed to all, the entire notion of ever being divided will not exist, thus it will follow that there cannot be war, because there will be no more concept of opposition.

Thus, if we really want to win a war, we need to awaken a point in ourselves which cannot be destroyed. The outer parts of our soul can be destroyed, but the *Yechidah* in us is the all-inclusive point; everything is in it - therefore, it cannot be destroyed.

This is the deep meaning behind the victory of the *Chashmonaim*, the handful of Jews that won against the Greeks. The *Chashmonaim* revealed their own inner power of the soul, the non-destructive point contained deep in the soul - and that was why the Greeks couldn't destroy them.

In the future, it is written, “*Esav will be like straw, and Yosef will be like fire that burns up the straw.*” This will be a deep kind of victory. When fire and water meet, they battle each other, and it takes a long time until one of the elements can overpower the other. But when fire is set upon straw, it takes only a few moments until all of the straw is destroyed; there is no opposition. So too, in the future, there will be no opposition, because it will be revealed how all is one, for Hashem's Name will be one. Oneness will be revealed – the all-inclusive point will be revealed, therefore, there will be no concept of division.

### *The Depth of Humility*

Chanukah was a war of a few Jews against many Greeks. Simply, this was a miracle, but the depth of it was, that “they made themselves small in their eyes”, as the Rabbis write.

This sounds simply that they had humility, when one makes himself small in his eyes. People think that humility means to focus on your shortcomings, and that it is arrogance to focus on your qualities. After all, it is true that the power of imagination can cause one to ignore reality, which in turn makes him ignore his shortcomings, while a person who is very aware of reality has humility, because he recognizes his shortcomings. It seems that humility is simply for a person to be aware of reality, thus he is aware of his shortcomings, in the same way that a person has to be realistic when he writes out a check and make sure that he still has money in his bank account.

But there is a deeper understanding of humility: when one recognizes the greater reality, which is the all-inclusive point in the soul, he sees how he is not nothing, for he is part of a greater whole; he is part of a collective essence. And that humbles him as a result.

But how did the small amount of Jews win the Greeks? It is something deeper: that they made themselves “small.” Because “they made themselves small in their own eyes” – because they had true humility - by recognizing the all-inclusive reality – that was how they were able to win the Greeks.

Humility is really to see yourself as part of a greater whole. It is to lessen the “I”, not by weakening it and ignoring your self-worth, but by realizing how your “I” is part of a greater whole. The *Chashmonaim* nullified their own essence, by having this deep humility, of seeing themselves as part of the greater whole, as part of the reality that is all-inclusive, as opposed to the ‘divided’ kind of reality.<sup>9</sup>

(There are people who don’t realize their self-worth. They don’t give enough value to their actual self, because they focus on their many shortcomings. They view themselves as lowly, and they see themselves as just scattered parts inside themselves. But this is not the true meaning of humility. Humility is not to dismiss reality – it is really to recognize your true self-worth of a Jew.)

The proper outlook for one to have is that although one shouldn’t pride himself too much about his qualities, he must never lessen his actual “I”. He can be aware of his shortcomings, but he doesn’t have to lessen the value of his essence. A person must always remain with his self-worth.)

Thus, the deep way to win a war is not through fighting a war. It is through revealing the power of *netzach*, eternity – to reveal the all-inclusive point in the soul, the non-destructive point of the soul. When one reveals his non-destructive essence, he indeed cannot be destroyed. And if one tries to destroy it, he is destroying himself.

### *Connecting To The Oneness of Hashem*

This power of deep unity with the world, known as “*echad*” (oneness), which will be fully revealed in the future, still exists deep in the soul, and is the deepest power of the soul. Hashem in “One”, and when one is connected with Hashem, he is connected to His oneness, and then the disparity in front of him ceases.

How did Dovid *HaMelech* defeat *Golyas*? With one rock. The depth of this is that he defeated him with the power of “one”, not simply that he managed to kill him with a small rock.

The war with the Greeks could not be won physically. It wasn’t possible. The only way was through revealing *echad* in their souls – they connected to Hashem, to His oneness; thus they had Hashem’s protection, and no one can fight Hashem. “*And they will see that the name of Hashem is upon you, and they will fear you.*” (Although Hashem is called “man of war”, this is a metaphor).

If two people are having a game with each other, it is not a fight. Although they are against each other, this is not viewed as a fight, but as a game.

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<sup>9</sup> In middle of this shiur, with regards to this aspect, the Rav clarified to a questioner that in the current reality we live in, we live in a divided reality, not in the all-inclusive reality; only in the future will we all live in an all-inclusive reality. For this reason, our body is obligated in the mitzvos, and there are different parts of our body which require different mitzvos. Our body represents divisions and disparity, because in the physical dimension, there is no concept of oneness. Only in the spiritual dimension there is oneness. In the future this will be fully revealed, and currently, we can have access to that spiritual dimension of the future when we access the deep part of our soul, the *Yechidah*. The Rav is explaining here how we can access the all-inclusive reality that is contained in our *Yechidah*.



When one wins the other, it's not that he has won the fight, because it's just a game; afterwards, they laugh with each other. So too, when one is connected to Hashem, he is protected by Him, and no one can fight Hashem – trying to fight Hashem is a joke.

There is no opposition, because any human who tries to oppose Hashem does not oppose Hashem. If it's not a fight, it can only be a game. When one approaches a fight with the perspective that he is against the other based on his human strengths, this will indeed be an opposition.

### *Victory Is Not Achieved Through Fighting*

Is there anyone who doesn't have any fights with others? It is not possible. The Talmud says that if there is a Rav in a city who is never opposed at all, he is not a real Rav, because he's probably being bribed.

(By the way, even before I came to deliver these *shiurim*, I already prepared myself for opposition. I knew that there were will be those who will fight with me about what I'm saying!)

We all need opposition. There is no person who does not have opposition. For everything good there is, Hashem created something else in evil that can oppose the good. There is only one whom there is no opposition to – Hashem, Who is One.

The war with the Greeks could have just been like any other war, where the two sides oppose each other. We all have wars. We have internal wars as well, inside ourselves, as well as in our homes, small and big fights. But we all have fights. How can we get out of all these fights?

It is by acquiring the deep perspective that winning the war is not through fighting the other side. That was the miracle of Chanukah – you can only win a war with a miracle, and that 'miracle' is for one to realize this deep perspective.

### *Accessing Peace In The Soul: Nullifying Yourself To Hashem*

Now we will make this concept more practical in our daily life.

How can we win our daily wars and fights with others that we all have? I am asking a very practical question, not a theoretical one.

People fight their fights either with their various physical strengths, or with their intellectual abilities. (There is a saying, "If you can't fight with *koach* (strength), fight with *moach* (brains).") But there is a third [deeper] way to fight, and it has nothing to do with strength or with brains.

The Kotzker *zt"l* said that if you can't win with strength, keep telling yourself that you do have strength, until you eventually win. That was one view. Another view was to use your intellectual abilities. A third way to win a war is through the power of prayer.

There is a point in our soul in which there are no wars, challenges, or oppositions. *Chazal* say, “Nullify your will to His will.” In other words, when you have no desires of your own, because you are nullified to Hashem, then the name of Hashem comes upon you, and then all those who think of opposing you won’t be able to oppose you, because you will then be connected to the oneness of Hashem.

It is brought in our *sefarim* that *Moshiach* will come with “weapons of war” and win over the entire world. People interpret this to mean that *Moshiach* will reveal how good prevails over evil. Will he throw a bomb on the world? Iran can do that too. How would that bring peace to the world?! How will he ‘win’ over the entire world?

He will be connected to the oneness of Hashem, thus, he will connect to all of Creation in his enormous love. *Moshiach* will win not through the conventional means of fighting, but because he will be utterly connected to oneness of Hashem, and nothing can oppose the oneness of Hashem.

Avraham *Avinu* was thrown into a fire and was untouched. The depth of this was because he was so connected to the oneness of Hashem that nothing could harm him. It wasn’t just a miracle. It was because he lived in a world where there was no opposition, because he was connected to the oneness of Hashem. Thus, he was totally nullified to Hashem, and therefore nothing could harm him. Of course, people fought him. He had wars. But in his soul, he was at peace with others, and that is why he could not be hurt by anyone.

### ***Access To Your Inner Peace***

The *Yechidah* in us can provide us with entirely new feelings/emotions altogether.

Our body and soul are in contradiction with each other. Our soul lives in complete oneness, while our body cannot come to terms with oneness. We cannot live in the state of complete oneness with others, because the peace of the future is not here yet. The view of our soul, this unity with the world, is not yet manifest in the physical world, for the time being. But we can still have some access to the deep peace that is in the soul and make use of it sometimes.

One can learn how to be amongst people who are saying things against him, but in his soul, he is living with inner peace. He hears what they are saying, but it doesn’t bother him, because he lives in place of no opposition.

People tend to be either realistic or delusional. Either people are realistic and they do not believe in any inner realities, or they go in the opposite direction and believe in spirituality, but they become delusional and ignore the external, physical dimension of our world. Both perspectives are wrong.

We are really a contradiction; our body tells us one viewpoint, while our soul tells us one viewpoint, and we can’t live with one of them alone. We need to fuse them together and handle the contradicting perspectives. There are different layers in us that have different perspectives towards

reality. Just as there many opinions amongst people, so are there many opinions within our own selves.

This sounds like we are unstable! But we can be very stable, even though we have different viewpoints going on inside ourselves.<sup>10</sup>

*Chazal* say that one must speak the “truth that is on his heart” (“*doiver emes b’levovo*”) – his mouth and heart should be in line with each other (*piv v’libo shavin*). The level of the heart can change each day, therefore, a person’s perspective changes each day. We have five parts in our soul – the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah* and *Yechidah*. There are times when we are on high level and times when we are lower. When we speak out what’s on our heart, it changes according to the level we are at.

If someone doesn’t speak from his soul, he is talking from his dry intellect. But if one speaks from his heart because he has opened his soul, then he can feel this in himself that he has different opinions towards the same subject, depending on the day, because the level of his soul fluctuates each day.

Thus, the victory over the Greeks was because they revealed their *Yechidah*, the point in the soul where is no oppositions, and that was how they won, because nothing can oppose the all-inclusive point in the soul.

### ***How To Win Over All Oppositions***

Let’s apply this now to our own lives. We all have oppositions with others – how do we fight properly when those inevitable fights come?

If we just try to win, we won’t win. We will just have fights, We won’t reach real victory.

I am not saying that peace can win everything and that you can sit back and relax that everything will just work out. This isn’t feasible at all, because we do have fights. The Torah speaks about fighting wars, either as an obligation or as a choice, but there are always wars and fights with others in our life.

How should we go about our fights, when those inevitable fights come? We need to fight not from fighting, but from using our power of inner peace, to reveal the point in us which has no wars, which is the *Yechidah*. Of course, you can’t see this reality in the physical world; it is an inner reality that is deep within the soul.

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<sup>10</sup> On an interesting note, the Rav responded to a questioner in middle of this shiur that often a person will go to a psychologist and try to sort out his contradicting goals he has in his life, and he will be told by the psychologist that he is delusional and a living contradiction. In reality, though, we are all full of contradicting desires – desires of the body and desires of the soul, and there is nothing wrong with this at all, because our soul is structured that way....

You can solve a fight in just half a minute, if you make sure to always access this deep power of the soul [when you yearn for peace]. When one accesses this inner peace in himself, his enemies disappear, and people will not fight him!

I am not saying that this will drive away all people who fight you, because the Greeks were certainly trying to fight the *Chashmonaim* even though the *Chashmonaim* had reached their inner peace, and in addition, we currently live *in* a world in which the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity surrounds us, which is very difficult to send off. But the point is that when you access the inner peace of the soul, the enemies around you won't be able to win against you, because the fight will lose its zenith, for the entire fight is being fueled by the fact that there each of the two side is warring against each other. Once one of the sides reaches a place inside himself in which there is no war, the entire war loses its fuel, and thus the war will cease on its own.

There are two ways to get rid of an enemy. Either you can fight with him and try to drive him away, or you can make peace with him, by uncovering your own ability of inner peace. When you uncover a peace in your own soul, your opposition will feel somewhat that you want peace, and when he feels your wish for peace, he will stop fighting you. There will be no place for a fight. Your opposition might not be aware why he is losing interest in fighting you, but he will still feel somewhat that there is no place now for a fight.

I will repeat and emphasize again that this inner solution does not work 100%. If it would, then our body would cease, and we would only be souls with no body. This is not possible in the current situation in the world, where we are not yet in the future. But if you make use of this point of the soul, it will greatly affect even your physical situation and radiate some of its light.

### ***Living With An Inner Contradiction***

When we reveal our *Yechidah* of the soul, we gain a new perspective on reality, and the old reality has no bearing on us anymore. Of Shabbos, *Chazal* say that you should consider it “as if all your work is done”. What does that mean? To pretend that your situation at work is fine just because it's Shabbos? We all know good and well that Sundays can be stressful and full of problems we have to deal with. But it's because there is a part in our soul which has the ability to view all our work “as if” it is done. The *Yechidah* is the point inside us which tells us that all is finished and done, that there are no problems,

If a person doesn't want to accept that there can be inside him this deep perspective on reality, then indeed, he will have no way of relating to this concept. He might feel that he is a realistic person who faces the facts of reality and that the view of the *Yechidah* is an escape from reality, so why fool yourself with it. After all, when a person hears about the *Yechidah*'s view on reality and he tells it over to others, what kind of reaction does he usually get from others? He will be told that he is being delusional, that he is trying to run away from life, that he can't deal with reality, that he is too idealistic in his aspirations, that he's not being realistic...

But in the future, it will be a day that is entirely Shabbos, and there will be peace and serenity for the entire world; nowadays, that reality hasn't been realized yet, but we still can have some access to it and touch it. Therefore, while we certainly have to be realistic in our life and not pretend that we have no problems or challenges, there is a point in our soul in which there exists *no challenges*.

Of course, we cannot live entirely in that place in our soul, because that is running away from the external layer of reality. We do not mean at all for one to become delusional and run away into himself and escape reality. Rather, what we mean is to believe that there is such a power in yourself, and when you believe in this feeling, you will feel the reality that is behind that feeling. When you feel that reality, you will discover a contradiction. On one hand, you have a point in yourself which is telling you that there are no problems, but at the same time, you see problems in front of you in the world that you live in. You can learn how to live with contradiction, however.

There are some days in which we feel completely serene and that we have no problems, and the next day, we feel like our entire world has come crashing down. What is the inner reason for this? It is because there are some days in which we live very internally, and our perspective on our life is then coming from our deep place in the soul that feels how there are no problems. So I am not saying that you should run away into yourself all the time. I am merely trying to tell you that there does exist a place in yourself in which you can return to every here and there to draw vitality from, and that will give you the strength to go back into your problems and deal with them with renewed vigor.

If a person only knows of the problems in his life, and he has no inner place of refuge in himself, he will have no vitality at all in his life. He only lives within his problems, and problems do not provide us with vitality. A person has to know how to escape the stress of life to a place in himself where he can draw forth vitality [when he accesses the calmness in his soul], and then when he returns to his problems, he will be able to feel alive even amidst his problems; he will not get drained from his problems and lose his vitality.

When you access your inner peace in the soul, you get used to the concept of a world in which there are no problems, and then when you return to the problems, you will know how to deal with them properly, even as you are amidst a problem. As you are going through the problem, you will be able to be above it.

### *In Conclusion*

The Greeks were defeated because the *Chashmonaim* accessed this deep power, of recognizing that there is only one reality, in which there are no oppositions. They “made themselves small”, in other words, they nullified their existence and did not see themselves as apart from others, therefore, they arrived at the deep perspective that there is a place in which there are no wars. Because they reached this place in which there are no wars, nothing could oppose them, and that was how they achieved victory.

May we merit to be granted by Hashem the power to connect deeply into our souls and from that we will be able to escape all our wars, and from that, we will merit the complete revelation of the days of *Moshiach*.

## 4 | *The Inner Light of Chanukah – A Clear Torah*<sup>11</sup>

### *Ohr Penimi: The Original, Inner Light of Torah*

Every Yom Tov contains an “*ohr penimi*”, an inner spiritual light. Chanukah, which contains much light, surely contains a certain *ohr penimi* to it.

What is the *ohr penimi* of Chanukah? It was a time in which *ohr* (spiritual light) was revealed on this world. By the Greek exile, the Chashmonaim<sup>12</sup> were a light amidst the darkness of that period. It is a lesson that even when there is so much darkness in the world, a light can be revealed and illuminate the darkness.

The Sages say that the *Yomim Tovim* which will disappear in the future, except for Purim, and some say Chanukah will not either disappear. What is the deep reason behind this? It is because the other *Yomim Tovim* celebrate the past, and the past will no longer be important in the future. But Chanukah and Purim are about the future dimension. They are about the revelation of the future: the future revelation of a perfect Torah. The Greek exile concealed the light of the Torah; when the Chashmonaim appeared on the scene and they succeeded, they essentially removed the evil of the Greek exile, and a new light of Torah was revealed with it.

The Sages state that the Greeks said, “Write for yourselves on the horn of a bull: We have no portion in the G-d of Israel.” The *Maharal* and others explain that this is hinting to the sin of the Golden Calf, which is a bull. The sin with the Calf caused great damage within the Jewish people; in other words, sin is similar to a bull, which gores with intention to damage<sup>13</sup>. The Chashmonaim merited to experience some of the light of the future, in which a light will come and illuminate the darkness. The miracle of Chanukah represents our purified state had we never sinned with the Calf after we received the Torah. Thus the Chashmonaim on Chanukah merited to reveal a bit of the future revelation: returning to our purified state without sin.

The Sages say that when the Greeks invaded the Temple, they made holes when they broke into the Temple. What is the deeper meaning behind this? It was because Greeks intended to break our unity. The Jewish people have a power of *echad*, the power to be “one”, to be unified. We were all “one” when we stood at Har Sinai; we all had “one heart”. The Greeks wanted to break up this unity, and that was what they were trying to show in making the holes in the *Beis HaMikdash*.

The Greek exile is defined by its secular influence on the Jewish people. They wanted their wisdom to replace the wisdom of the Torah. They caused damage to us in doing so, and because of the Greek exile, we are still missing the *ohr penimi* of Torah.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-010-inner-light>

<sup>12</sup> *The Hasmoneans*

<sup>13</sup> *Bava Kamma 2b*

## ***“Ohr Torah” Is Not Yet the “Ohr Penimi” of Torah***

In the future, we will get the “*ohr penimi*” back. We still have the “*ohr*” (the light) of Torah, but we are missing the “*ohr penimi*” of Torah.

In today’s times, we can see that there is much Torah learning taking place. There is definitely a lot of *ohr* of Torah in our present times. But it is rare to find someone who is connected to the *ohr penimi* of Torah. You can have a person who is able to come up with very brilliant *chiddushei Torah*<sup>14</sup>, but that doesn’t always mean he’s connected in an inner way to the Torah. Of course, it is wonderful that there are *chiddushei Torah. Baruch Hashem*. But we are often missing the *ohr penimi* of Torah within these *chiddushei Torah*....

What is the *ohr penimi* of Torah? It is the true light of Creation, the original light of Creation, which Hashem created already before the first day of Creation. What is it, though? The *Pirkei D’Rebbi Eliezer* states that before Creation, Hashem was completely One, and His light filled the entire universe. That is describing the *ohr penimi*: state where Hashem’s oneness fills all of existence.

We currently live in a state of disparity. “*Sinas chinam* (baseless hatred) still dances among us”.<sup>15</sup> We are missing the original light of Torah which unified together all the disparities. The original light of the Torah was the *ohr haganuz* (“the hidden light”) which was able to see from one end of the world to the other. What did this mean? It did not mean simply that one was able to use it to see from one country to another country on the other side of the world. It meant that one had the “*ohr penimi*” of Torah – meaning, he had utter clarity through the Torah. There were no questions. Everything was clear.

The *ohr penimi* of Torah was that a person was connected to every part of the Torah with utter clarity. This was the Torah we had before the sin with the Calf. Thus, when a person learns a *sugya* of *Gemara*, and he merits to understand it with clarity, he needs to awaken his yearning for that original clarity we once had in Torah - the Torah of before the sin.

## ***“A Man and His Household”***

The *mitzvah* to light the Chanukah menorah is upon “a man and his household.” What is the meaning behind this? Does it mean that the man of the house fulfills the *mitzvah* for the rest of his household? Is it just a *mitzvah* upon the house? It is because the *mitzvah* of *ner Chanukah* was given to us so we can return to our very soul: “a man and his household” – the “household” is our soul, our root.

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<sup>14</sup> novel Torah thoughts

<sup>15</sup> Yoma 9b



## *Yearning for Torah Lishmah*

We must know that there is more to reveal in the Torah, that there is more to the Torah that we must yearn for. It is not simply that we must yearn to finish more *masechtos*<sup>16</sup> of Gemara; that is wonderful too, but it is not yet the “*ohr penimi*” of Chanukah. The “*ohr penimi*” of Chanukah is accessed when has a yearning to reveal the clarity in the words of Torah that we have already learned. We may have learned much Torah already, but we haven’t merited yet to understand it all very clearly, because we are living after the sin. But we must yearn for the utter clarity in the words of Torah, even though we cannot currently get it.

To reach the “*ohr penimi*” of Chanukah, we must get rid of our various desires that we may have, and instead only desire to learn Torah *lishmah* (for its own sake). Torah *lishmah* does not mean that we desire to learn Torah for the purpose of whatever we gain from it. That would be a Torah of disparity. Torah *lishmah* is to learn Torah because we truly want to connect to the Torah.

The *halachah* is that we are not allowed to benefit from the Chanukah lights, and we are only allowed to look at them. This hints to what we must yearn for in Torah: we must only desire to “see” the Torah as it is, and not to use it for various personal benefits. We must desire the Torah simply to see it – and only to see it. The only benefit we may have from the Chanukah lights is that we can look at them; this hints to us how we must yearn for Torah simply so we can “see” it, and not for any other personal benefits.

## *In Conclusion*

This is the “*ohr penimi*” of Torah: to learn Torah not for own personal gain, but to truly yearn to connect to Torah. May we all be merit to prepare ourselves to reach the “*ohr penimi*” of Chanukah, which is the “*ohr penimi*” of Torah.

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<sup>16</sup> *Tractates of the Talmud*

## 5 | *Experiencing Chanukah*<sup>17</sup>

### *The Light of Chanukah: Spiritual Or Physical?*

Let us learn here about Chanukah in a way that is not just about something that we go through, but as something that really can affect us, experientially.

All of the festivals contain *ohr*, spiritual light, but Chanukah in particular is the epitome of *ohr*. In the other festivals, the light is purely spiritual, but on Chanukah, although the light is also spiritual, it manifests also as a physical light that we empower, through the eight lights that we light on Chanukah.

The lights of Chanukah seem to be lit through a wick and oil, but the inner way to understand it is that the *light revealed during Chanukah is what is lighting the wick*. The wicks, the oil and the flame that we see are [merely] the physical ‘garments’ that clothe the spiritual light that is Chanukah. Of course, it looks like we are lighting it. But it is really the light [revealed during] Chanukah which is shining through the physical wick.

This is the depth behind the *halachah* that it is forbidden to benefit from the light of Chanukah: we may not use spirituality for This World. When we light [the *menorah*], a spiritual light emerges [from the hidden realm of spiritual light]. Our physical eyes just see a candle, but our soul sees spiritual light in it.

Although our soul sees spirituality in things, one needs to have a revelation of his soul in order for the soul to see spirituality. With our physical eyes, all we see are just candles burning; therefore we need to actually connect our *soul* to the spirituality of the hidden light that is revealed on Chanukah.

### *Seeing The Lights From Our Soul*

The *neshamah* (Jewish soul) is described in the verse, "נֵר ה' נִשְׁמַת אָדָם", "*The flame of Hashem is the soul of man*". A *ner* (flame) is composed of a *kli* (vessel, or container), oil, and the fire. Our *neshamah* is called "*ner*" (flame), and it is also called "*ohr*" (light), whereas the "*kli*" (the vessel or container) that holds the *neshamah* is our physical *guf* (the body).

The *neshamah* is called "*ner*" (flame). Our physical body is created from earth, whereas the soul in us comes from the "breath of Hashem" that was breathed into man by Hashem. Hashem is entirely *ohr*, so to speak. The earth which our body comes from is a dark material, thus our body is of a "dark" substance, whereas our soul is taken from "light". Since man is a combined existence of body and soul, his existence is essentially a mixture of light and darkness.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-017-experiential-chanukah>

Every person is essentially a light contained within darkness. There is a statement, “*A little light can push away much darkness.*”<sup>18</sup> We see from the physical world that a small light can light up a dark room, and so too, when our soul is concealed from our access, we will feel like we are groping in the dark. When our soul becomes revealed to us, however, there is a great light we experience, which sends away the “darkness” that is the body.

Thus, when a person hasn’t yet revealed his soul, he lives in darkness. He will experience life through a dark lens. When a person begins to merit a revelation of his soul, his soul begins to shine, and he experiences a degree of spiritual light.

These are the two kinds of lenses through which we experience life: either we see through a dark lens, or we see life through a lens of light.

In deeper terms, there is *ayin ra*, a “bad eye”, and *ayin tov*, a “good eye.” The perspective of “*ayin ra*” comes from the view of the body, and the perspective of “*ayin tov*” is the view from the soul.

They are different lenses in a person. It is not simply that there are different personalities of either “*ayin ra*” or “*ayin tov*” that some people have positive personalities and some people have negative personalities. Rather, “*ayin tov*” and “*ayin ra*” are perspectives of how we experience life – either we are viewing life from the prism of the body, or the soul. “*Ayin ra*” represents the body’s viewpoint, a view from “darkness”, which is a perspective that is darkened by materialism of This World. Thus it does not offer a clear view on life. In contrast, “*ayin tov*” is a view of “light”, which is pleasant and calming.

These are root concepts of the soul. The world we are in is a mix of light and darkness, a mix of good and evil. And it is mostly dark. What is the world looking like right now? What is it calling out? It is calling out darkness. The world is conveying to us a message of unhappiness, pain, and difficulty – a life of darkness. It is not a place that is mostly good, pure, holy and happy.

A person sees from the place in himself that he is at now. Therefore, if he has a dark lens on life, if he is living a materialistic kind of life where his body dominates and his soul is unrevealed in his life, then he will see a dark life in front of him. If you view life through dirty glasses, everything will look dirty, even if you are looking at something clean. For this reason, when a person sees others, he usually doesn’t see people as souls whom he can have a connection to. He usually just sees the thick materialism of others, he relates to their superficial shell, and as such, he relates to others as physical bodies, and he does not see them as souls in front of him.

But when a person reveals his soul, he will see others through a clear lens. Then he will see the joy, purity, and cleanliness in front of him. This does not mean that he will be naïve and that he’s not aware of reality. He is well aware of reality on this world, but he has gained a view of others that is pristine, clear, and clean.

For example, when he speaks with others, like when asking someone for directions, he will understand that he is speaking with a *soul*, and not with a body. When he asks questions to others,

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<sup>18</sup> *Chovos HaLevovos: Shaar Yichud HaMaaseh: 5*

he is aware that he is asking it from his *soul*. And when a person speaks from his soul, the soul of the other picks up on it, because the soul is receptive to the sound of another soul. Where you speak from is what the other person will hear; if you speak from your body, the other person hears your gruff body talking, and when you speak from your soul, the other's soul hears words coming from your soul.

The world today doesn't have that much speech coming from the soul. When a person meets another and greets him, does he really mean it that the other should have a good day? "Good morning" has become more like a mannerism. Contrast this with what was said about the Alter of Slobodka, who would practice saying "Good Morning" to himself, because he held that it was giving a *beracha* (blessing) to others.

This is different view on life - totally.

### *Speaking and Acting From Within Yourself*

When a person is talking, where is he speaking from in himself? A person can talk either from the most external part of himself, or from the most innermost part of himself that he identifies with.

Most natural speech flows from the external part of the soul. The more inner a person's speech is, the more it reflects the statement "*words from the heart enter the heart.*" This should not just be limited to when a person is conveying a deep emotion such as "I love you", or "I feel your pain". It is referring to how a person speaks *all the time*. All of the time, we really need to speak from our innermost place that we currently identify with.

Most people live from their body and speak from their body, and the person hearing him hears the words from his body. But when a person speaks from his soul, it can go into another's soul, and the other person will hear it from his soul, because his soul will pick up on it.

Chanukah is a time of "light", but it is not just a time to light. The light of Chanukah specifically reminds us that the physical is a container for the spiritual – that our body contains a soul. The other festivals are also a spiritual light, but they don't take on physical form. The light of Chanukah takes on a physical form, showing us that spirituality can be clothed by physicality.

These are not mere intellectual definitions, but a practical view of life to have every day of your life. We do many actions throughout the day. A person washes his hands, for example. How does he do it? We understand that this is allowed through the brain, which sends messages to the body and enables it to function. But when a person tells "Good Morning" to his children, does he do so with at least a little bit of feeling, at least a little more than when he washes his hands? Certainly, he puts some feeling into it. But how many times a day, or a week, or a month, or a year, though do we act from an inner place in ourselves? Are we speaking from a deeper place in ourselves on a more regular basis?

Most people do not access the depth that is contained in themselves. A person who is living inwardly is someone who lives with his depth, all the time, on a regular basis. He lives always with the deepest place in himself. Just like we all use the sink many times a day, a person who lives life in an inner way is using the deepest place he knows of in himself - all the time.

A person usually accesses his inner depth only when there are extreme emotions, of either intense joy or grief. A person usually cannot take that depth that he has reached and bring it more into his daily life. He may remember the pain he felt from his sadness or the joy that he felt when he rejoiced, but he will not remember the *depth* of the emotions that he reached.

The depth that we *do* recognize in ourselves, though – how much are we in touch with it on a daily basis?

### *Recognition of Ourselves*

We must recognize who we are. Of course, the purpose of everything is to recognize Hashem. But if we do not recognize ourselves, we can't recognize Hashem. Skipping self-recognition prevents recognition of Hashem. From recognizing ourselves, we can come to recognize Hashem<sup>19</sup>.

Surely, the deepest thing possible is to connect to Hashem, but before we get to that stage, one has to know himself well and identify the deepest place in himself.

How can it be that a person is not in touch with the deepest part of himself? We can memorize many phone numbers. How can it be that we don't recognize our own self?

If we really want to live a true life, we need to know what our deepest point is in ourselves, which can take a long time to know. After that, one needs to ask himself if his depth has deepened from before. The way we identify ourselves has to mature as the years go on.

We can say in general how deep the soul is, but you on your own need to uncover the depth of your own soul, and then you need to know how to live with it all the time. At least once a day, make sure that you are using it. *That* is what Chanukah is all about.

### *The Deepest Point In Yourself*

I will try here to explain what the deepest point of the soul is, but it will be hard to understand it, both intellectually as well as emotionally, because each person is at a different point.

The deepest part of the soul, the deepest experience your soul can know of is **to experience your very existence** (*havayah*). (There is really a higher experience, which is to experience the reality of

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<sup>19</sup> Raavad (Rabbi Avraham ben David, 10th century scholar); based on the verse, "From my flesh, I see G-d."

the Creator, which is reached through *emunah* and *d'veykus* with Hashem. That is an experience above the “I”, however. Here we are describing the experience that is within the “I”.)

One’s very existence is his deepest experience. It is not the will of a person, it is not aspiration, it is not giving, it is not enduring suffering, and it is not joy. Those are all deep experiences, but the deepest experience is to experience one’s existence.

A person needs to be able to remove all the external layers covering the soul, and then he can experience himself. It is not a place of any desires, because it is above all desires.

When a person purifies himself through doing the *mitzvos*, through attaining a state of purity, and through correcting his *middos*, then he calms the soul.<sup>20</sup> He can then experience the soul. When he experiences his own soul, he can feel his existence then and be able to live it on a daily basis.

All day, people are running around, and this causes people not to be in touch with the soul. This refers to internal running as well, in which people are running all the time with their desires. They are not calm inside, and they never reach their soul. Therefore, people wonder what the deepest experience is. But the deepest experience is: to experience your own self!

You can’t live from your depth if you haven’t accessed it yet. When you do access it, you need to then live with it all the time – sensibly, of course. This will reveal more and more depth to you as time goes on. In order to get to your own depth, you first need to live daily with the deepest point in yourself – you can think about it and can feel it throughout the day.

These are not ideas or opinions – it is about life. May we merit from Hashem to know our souls and to realize our depths, our existence, and from there, to reach *d'veykus* with Hashem.

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<sup>20</sup> See the series of *Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus*

## 6 | *Chanukah: Seeing the Beginning*<sup>21</sup>

We are now approaching Chanukah. Let us understand the concept of this Yom Tov in a way that can affect our own souls.

We have three *Yomim Tovim* according to the Torah – Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkos. The Sages enacted two more *Yomim Tovim* – Chanukah and Purim. We find that the *Yomim Tovim* of the Torah are each seven days, which end up becoming eight. Sukkos is seven days, and then there is an “eighth day” of Sukkos, which is *Shemini Atzeres*. Pesach is seven days, but from a deeper perspective, it is actually “eight” days, because the Ramban writes that Shavuot is called “the *Shemini Atzeres*” of Pesach. Chanukah, though, is eight days to start with.

What is the difference between the *Yomim Tovim* of the Torah, which are seven days that really add up to eight, and Chanukah, which is eight days to start out with?

*Chazal* say that when a person smiles at someone, it is better than giving him a cup of milk. Why? This is because when you smile at someone, you radiate a light towards him, and this is more illuminating than even the white color of the milk. This is Chanukah: it is a light that radiates outward. The oil of Chanukah which we light with is that illumination that radiates outwards.

Oil is “*shemen*” in Hebrew, which is similar to the word “*shemoneh*” – the number eight. Chanukah is eight days, hinting to the fact that it is above regular time, which contains seven days in a week. The *Yomim Tovim*, which are each seven days that become eight, are within regular time. The *Yomim Tovim* are a revelation of a concept that we can use the regular times of the year to go above time. But Chanukah is eight days to start with, because it reveals a light that is above time in the first place.

The oil that we light the menorah with on Chanukah, which is lit to commemorate the miracle of Chanukah, is long after the miracle during the time of Chanukah happened many years ago. This is because Chanukah is a light that transcends time. It continues to radiate long after the “time” of the miracle of Chanukah has happened. We aren’t commemorating Chanukah because it was a miracle that happened long ago history; rather, it is a time of light, even now.

Hashem created the world to have a timeframe of seven days, creating the world in “seven” days; the six days of the week, and Shabbos. But if we count the Shabbos that Hashem started out the world with, we get eight days. On a deeper understanding, there are really eight days in Creation –

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-018-seeing-beginning>

the Shabbos of before Creation [when there was nothing yet in Creation, and there was nothing but the oneness of Hashem]<sup>22</sup>, the six days of the week, and then Shabbos of after Creation.

The light of Chanukah, which we light for eight days, reveals this “eight-day” concept. Normally, time consists of seven days, but the deeper aspect of Creation is that there is an eighth day – a spiritual light that is above time.

We find in *halacha* that if Chanukah begins on Friday night, we light 30 minutes earlier than sundown on Friday. How can this be? How are we able to light for Chanukah when it isn't Chanukah yet? We aren't able to bring the *korbon pesach* early. So why are we able to light for Chanukah earlier than its time? The answer to this mystery is because Chanukah is above time.

What exactly is this special light of Chanukah, which transcends time? It is really the light of *emunah* (faith in Hashem).

*Emunah* is a power that is not limited to any time. *Emunah* says to us that what you see as the beginning isn't really the beginning, because there was something that came before it. You see seven days of the week, but there was a Shabbos that came before it.

(This also alludes to the “letter *aleph*” which Hashem used to create the world with, before He created the world using the letter *beis*. We only see Creation starting from the letter “*beis*,” *Beraishis*, and we do not see what preceded it – the letter *aleph*).

During our regular seven-day time period, we can reach the “letter *aleph*” of before Creation, though utilizing the seven days. But on Chanukah, we start already from that point of the “letter *aleph*” preceding Creation.

Avraham *Avinu* illuminated the world through his *emunah* – how? He radiated that power of *emunah*, which came before Creation, onto the seven days of the world that are after Creation. He used that letter “*aleph*” which was around before Creation – the light of perfect *emunah* in the Creator.

This is why some say that in the future, Chanukah will not cease, while all the other festivals will cease. It is because the power which is Chanukah – the light of the perfect *emunah*, which existed even before Creation – can never cease.

Now that we have seen this concept, let us see how this applies to our very soul. Any light which exists in the world seems to be coming from the sun. But from where is the sun getting its light from? It gets its light from the heavenly spheres above it, which Hashem sustains. The light of our Chanukah *Menorah* seems to be coming from this world, but all light comes from Heaven, so we are really using a spiritual light that is Heavenly.

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<sup>22</sup> For more on the “Shabbos of before creation”, refer to the Rav's series on *Shabbos Kodesh*, in particular, the *shiur* of שבת קודש של שבתות (ספר בלבבי משכן אבנה - שבת קודש - קודש\_01\_שליש שבתות)



That is the meaning behind the *halachah* why it is forbidden to benefit from the Chanukah lights. It is really because the light gets its source from Heaven, and thus we are not allowed to use it. Normally, we are allowed to benefit from light. We were also allowed to benefit from the light that shined by the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*. But on Chanukah, we are prohibited from benefiting from the lights. Why? There is a special *halachah* that on Chanukah, it has to be recognizable from the street who is lighting the *Menorah*. This hints to how we must recognize the True Source of the Chanukah lights – “Who” is really lighting this *Menorah*....

It is written, **נר ה' נשמת אדם** – the *neshamah* \soul is called *ner*, a flame, a light. Every light is lit by a source. There is a Source that lights the flame of the *neshamah*. By seeing the lights on Chanukah, we can recognize Who lit these lights; Who the beginning of all this is. We can see the Chanukah lights and see Who is the Master that lit it - where the beginning source of these lights are. This represents the power to have complete, perfect *emunah*. That is the real light of Chanukah.

When a person walks into a building and he sees light, it usually doesn't make a difference to him who lit up the building. But Chanukah teaches us that we must see the beginning, the source, of all light – Hashem. We usually only focus on the purpose of everything, but do we ever think about the source of things? That is the lesson of Chanukah: we can see “the beginning” of everything.

“I am the First, and I am the Last.” (אני הראשון ואני האחרון). It is not just enough to know “I am the Last”, the fact that Hashem is the end goal of everything; we have to also be aware that He is also the *beginning* of everything – “I am the First.” We must see how He is *both* the beginning and end of everything. In everything we see, we must attribute its source to Hashem.

*Chochmah*, wisdom, is also called *ohr*/light. The Torah, which is the revelation of the higher and G-dly *chochmah*, is called “*Torah Ohr*”, “Torah of light.” This is because *ohr* serves to show us what the beginning of everything is.

This is the special ability of the Jewish people: we can see the beginning of things, and not just the goal of whatever everything leads up to. The nations of the world only focus on what something leads up to, but they do not have the power to trace everything back to its beginning. Take a look at the world today. The people in the world today are running wildly after new gadgets and all kinds of innovations. To analyze this deeper, they aren't interested in the ‘beginnings’ of anything - only in what they can ‘get out’ of something; they are immersed in endpoints, not in beginnings.

The Torah, in contrast, is entirely a revelation of the Beginning where it comes from. Although we also must pursue the end goal of everything, knowing that the purpose of life is to reach closeness with Hashem and that the eventual purpose of all of Creation is when Hashem's existence will be fully revealed to all, and there will be nothing besides Him (“I am the Last”), we also need to search for the beginning source of everything, attributing the source of everything to Hashem, Who is the Beginning of everything.

Thus, Chanukah is not about the “purpose” of things, which is about the end. It is about the beginning. It shows us that we must search for the **beginning** of everything. The Beginning of everything is Hashem, and so are Torah and the Jewish people called “*raishis*”, the beginning.

That is why the light of Chanukah reveals how the Torah radiates through the light of Chanukah. It reveals “Torah *Ohr*”, the “Torah of light”, the kind of Torah where we see Hashem as the beginning in everything.

There is a *minhag* on Chanukah to eat dairy. We understand why we eat foods with oil in it, because the miracle happened with oil. But why do we eat dairy on Chanukah?

Earlier, we quoted the words of *Chazal*, that smiling at someone is better than giving him a cup of milk. In this we can find the answer to our question. If I smile at someone, I am showing him the white of my teeth - I am radiating a light toward another, I am giving him *he'aras panim* (a radiant countenance). I am bestowing upon another, with my smile, the *chochmah*/wisdom that is found within me – as it is written, “*The wisdom of man radiates on his face.*” With a smiling countenance, I am shining upon another the light of the “beginning” of all wisdom.

This is why we eat dairy on Chanukah, to allude to how we must radiate our “white” teeth toward others, which *Chazal* say is even valuable than giving your friend a cup of milk. On Chanukah, we light the *Menorah* to radiate that spiritual light outwards toward others – the light of the Beginning.

Thus, Chanukah does not come to show us the “purpose” of these days. It rather comes to show us what the beginning of it is. What we learn from Chanukah is that we must make sure to always look for the beginning of something. We shouldn't only pursue our goals that we are heading towards. What we mainly need to do is to reflect about the beginning of everything. In whatever you do, think about its beginning. The beginning of anything is Hashem. When you think about this, you will find that you will be much more motivated to get to your goal.

It's more important to think about the beginning of each thing than to think about the purpose of each thing. Let's say a person loves a certain thing. Why does he love it? If he reflects, he can discover that all loves are rooted in the Creator, because love is a power which comes from the Creator. He is the source of everything.

We must access our power of seeing the “beginning” in everything. This is really the “*ohr haganuz*”, the “hidden light” that Hashem hid away at the beginning of Creation. We can access the “hidden light” when we think into the beginnings of everything, and we discover that Hashem is the source of absolutely everything. It is a “hidden light” because at first this perspective is hidden from a person – until he finds it.

This power can be revealed on Chanukah. By accessing our power to see the beginning of everything, we can truly come to connect to the Creator - Who is the First, and the Last. **אני הראשון ואני האחרון**.

## 7 | *Chanukah: Having Mesirus Nefesh For Torah*<sup>23</sup>

### *Chanukah: The Light of Torah, Revealed Through Mesirus Nefesh*

In Chanukah, we find two important concepts, which are really intertwined [*mesirus nefesh*, and the revelation of the light of the *menorah* (the Torah)].

Chanukah was a time in which the Jewish people showed *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice); they went to war even though they were outnumbered. They were willing to get killed. Their efforts resulted in being able to light the *menorah*. As is well-known, the *menorah* represents the Torah.

It is clear that the way the *Chashmonaim* fought the war, and the results of this war that they fought, were interconnected aspects. Their war was fought with *mesirus nefesh*, and the results of the war revealed the light of the Torah. Each of these revealed unique aspects upon Creation.

The *menorah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* had seven branches, while the *menorah* we light on Chanukah has eight lights. The depth of this is because the *mesirus nefesh* that was revealed on Chanukah revealed an even greater level of “light” of the actual *Menorah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* when it was in its full purity. The light of their *mesirus nefesh* revealed the light of Torah, the level of “eight”, which is above “seven”.

What indeed is the connection between *mesirus nefesh* and Torah? Why did their *mesirus nefesh* result in a revelation of the light of Torah?

### *Mesirus Nefesh: Going Beyond The Normal Abilities of the Soul*

The depth of the war with the Greeks was that it was “a few, fighting the majority”. In terms of the soul, this means that it involved fighting a power that is beyond human strength. That is the power in the soul called “*mesirus nefesh*”. Each person has abilities in his soul, but all of these abilities are limited. *Mesirus nefesh*, though, enables a person to go beyond the limits of his own soul. With true *mesirus nefesh*, one can touch upon the unlimited; he touches upon his Root and connects to it.

### *Mesirus Nefesh In Torah Learning: Connecting To The Higher Source of Torah*

“Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world”<sup>24</sup>, and the *Midrash* states that “the Jewish people were the first thoughts of Hashem” to be created. The Jewish people are the “first” of Creation; we were the first to be formed from the Torah. When a Jew serves Hashem according to

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-042-mesirus-nefesh-torah>

<sup>24</sup> Zohar

his various abilities of his soul, he is epitomizing the “first” Creation. But when a person goes beyond his limits, through using *mesirus nefesh*, he is attaching himself to the very Source that he was hewn from. From that place, comes true understanding in Torah.

It is written, “*Wisdom, from where is it found?*” Chazal say that when one makes himself into “*ayin*” (nothing), meaning, when he nullifies himself to the Source that he comes from, he receives the true wisdom of Torah.

Understanding in Torah doesn’t come from oneself. There is a concept of one who learns Torah from within himself (as the Sages say, “Avraham learned Torah from himself”<sup>25</sup>), but there is also a source of Torah which comes from higher than the self: when one’s Torah learning is coming from the Source of the self. This higher source of Torah can be accessed by a person through the power of *mesirus nefesh*, which enables one to go above his normal soul abilities and connect to the Source that is above it.

### ***Two Different Sources For Torah: Shavuot and Chanukah***

There is our soul, and there is its source. When a person wants Torah, there are two sources he can get it from. One source can be reached on the festival of Shavuot, through the ability of accepting the yoke of learning Torah. The other source can be reached on Chanukah, where one can acquire the power of *mesirus nefesh* in order to understand the Torah.

Thus, Chanukah is an opportunity for us to understand how *mesirus nefesh* is a source to access understanding in our Torah learning.

### ***Uncovering Mesirus Nefesh In Our Torah Learning***

When a person merits to penetrate into this place in his soul that is above his actual level of understanding [through having *mesirus nefesh* in his Torah learning and persevering to understand it], he reaches the spiritual light of Chanukah, which enables him to understand the Torah from that higher source.

Understanding the Torah can only come from putting in effort and exertion to understand it, using our normal capabilities, but it also requires one to exert himself a little bit beyond his normal capabilities.

If a person goes his whole life learning Torah using only his natural capabilities, or if he doesn’t try as much as he can (which is usually the case), he won’t be able to see true success in Torah learning. But if someone uncovers his ability of *mesirus nefesh*, he can go above his own abilities, and from there, he can connect to the Source which Torah is derived from.

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<sup>25</sup> *Midrash Tanchuma, parshas Vayigash*

“The way of the wise is to always think”, as the Ramchal writes. How indeed can a person think all day in learning? What do most people think about all day? Most People think about themselves all day. That is human nature. But when a person uncovers his ability of *mesirus nefesh*, he can go above this nature, and he acquires for himself a new nature - and then he will be able to think all the time about Torah. This is the true kind of connection to one’s Torah learning.

This doesn’t mean to force oneself to think in learning. Forcing oneself to think in learning is perhaps a way to get started, and in addition, it needs to be done sensibly. But when one uncovers his *mesirus nefesh*, he is connected to the source of the Torah, and he will get his understanding from there. Whereas most people are naturally thinking about themselves all day – or about things that are interesting to them – so can a person who uncovers his power of *mesirus nefesh* have a natural ability to think all day about the Torah he’s learning. On a deeper level, he can think all the time about *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

As long as one has not reached the point where he is *naturally* thinking about what he is learning throughout the day, he hasn’t reached his soul’s point of *mesirus nefesh* [for Torah]. Our Rabbis wrote that those who reached true understanding in Torah merited that their initial thoughts came from *Ruach HaKodesh*. How? It was because their thoughts naturally thought about the Torah they were learning. Just as the average person naturally thinks about himself all the time, so does a person who reaches *mesirus nefesh* naturally think about Torah all the time (and on a more subtle note, Hashem).

This is the deep place in the soul which one needs to connect to in order to get the light of the Torah. This is what the Rambam describes, that exertion in Torah learning requires one to “kill himself in the tents of Torah” – one has to ‘kill’ his own essence, his own abilities, by going above them.

### ***Mesirus Nefesh: Reaching The Endless Level of Torah***

If one never learns how to go above his “I”, then all of his Torah learning is being experienced through his simple “I” [the ego], and then all of his understanding in Torah will be limited to his human comprehension. And since most people are sullied from sin, some more and some less, as well as bad *middos* that inhabit the soul – the understanding in one’s Torah learning are negatively affected by these factors. But when one penetrates deep into himself and he uncovers his power of *mesirus nefesh*, he goes above his own soul, and his understanding in Torah will come from a higher source; it will be the kind of Torah that is endless.

### ***The Light That Burned For Eight Days: The Ability To Go Above Nature (In Torah)***

The oil of Chanukah which lasted for eight days represented the spiritual light that is above the limits of human wisdom; that is why the oil was not bound to nature. The oil was not bound to the limits of nature. The fact that the oil stopped burning after eight days was actually a novelty, because the fact that the oil lasted for eight days was no novelty! (After eight days, the endlessness of the spiritual light was taken away and clothed by this current limited reality.)

### *Dedicating Our Entire Life To Torah Learning*

If a person connects to Torah only from within his limited abilities, his understanding in Torah will be limited to what he can comprehend, and human comprehension is very limited. Woe to the person whose entire understanding in Torah is limited to his human mind. But when a person is in touch with his power of *mesirus nefesh* and uses it to learn Torah – when he goes above his normal abilities in order to learn Torah – it’s not an issue of how much time one learns. It is rather about how one dedicates his entire being to the Torah.

Just as Avraham tied Yitzchok to the altar, so do all of us have the power of *mesirus nefesh* in our own souls; we can all give up our whole being to the Torah.

Imagine if you were given a choice if you would die, or if the Torah will cease instead of you. What would you choose...?

This is not a question a person can answer in one second. But a person can reach the point where he is prepared to completely give himself up for Hashem.

There is a concept of *mesirus nefesh* in which one gives up his body for the Torah; but this is not the *mesirus nefesh* that was revealed on Chanukah. It is rather the light of *Olam HaBa* (the Next World), in which we are divested of our body. The *mesirus nefesh* revealed on Chanukah is: to give up our very being, in order to understand Torah.

If a person decides that he is ready each day to completely give himself up for the Torah, and that is how he approaches his learning, he will be guided to understand the Torah through the light of *mesirus nefesh*, and his connection to his learning will be endless, because he won’t be able to ever part from the Torah; he has become nullified to the Torah and integrated with it, because he is ready to have *mesirus nefesh* for it.

### *In Conclusion*

The words here were about something subtle, and deep. The concepts here are far from anyone who doesn’t think about these things, and they are closer to someone who seeks the light of truth.

If one reflects about this and he really wants it, and he decides that he is ready all the time to have *mesirus nefesh* – meaning, that each day before he goes to learn, he decides that he is willing to have complete *mesirus nefesh* for the Torah – he is one who will truly merit the “light” of the Torah.

May we merit from the Creator that our bond with the Torah should come from the deepest place in our soul: to be able to go above our own soul and become connected to the Source of all the Torah we learn, where Torah comes from. And though this, may all of us together with the entire Jewish people merit the complete revelation of “Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael are one.”

## 8 | *Chanukah: Greek Influence Today*<sup>26</sup>

### *The Current Exile of “Erev Rav”*

In *Al HaNissim*, the Greeks are described as “*zeidim*”, rebellious ones, who came to uproot the Torah.

Our Rabbis teach that we will go through seven exiles: Egypt, Bavel, Persia, Greece, Edom, Yishmael, and the *Erev Rav*.<sup>27</sup> Each of the exiles had a specific time that they lasted for. But the last exile, the exile of the *Erev Rav* (these are reincarnations of the “*Erev Rav*” [Mixed Multitude] souls who left Egypt together with the Jewish people, and influenced them to do evil) has no specific time, because it includes all of the exiles together.

Therefore, the current and final exile – the exile of the *Erev Rav* – is not just “the exile of the *Erev Rav*” alone. It includes all of the influences of the nations, together, at once. The exiles of Egypt, Bavel, Persia, Greece, Edom and Yishmael each have their specific natures. But the exile of the *Erev Rav* includes ingredients of all of them at once. This is the depth of our final exile, and this is why it is so hard.

Now we can understand why the final exile is the most difficult. No one knows when the current and final exile will end; it hasn’t been revealed to anyone. But we are definitely in it, as our Rabbis wrote about.

The more subtle definition of explaining it is that we are in the exile of Edom, and within that, the exile of Yishmael, and within that – the exile of the *Erev Rav*. The main part of the exile is the “*Erev Rav*” aspect. It is an exile which includes all exiles; clearly, then, it is the most difficult of all the exiles. It pits us against the nations as never before. From all sides, we are surrounded with the evil influences that seek to ensnare us.

That describes the place and time we are in.

### *The Unique Nature of The Greek Exile*

In a certain sense, the Greek exile was also different than the other exiles. The Egyptian, Babylonian and Persian exiles all took place outside of *Eretz Yisrael*, but the Greek exile took place in *Eretz Yisrael*, and not only that, but with the *Beis HaMikdash* still standing.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-048-greek-influence-today-erev-rav>

<sup>27</sup> Although we refer generally to the “four” exiles (Bavel\Babylonia, Yavan\Greece, Persia, and Edom\Rome) the four really subdivide for a total of seven, when we add on Egypt, the root of all exiles; and the last exile, Edom, which breaks up into two additional exiles: the exile of Yishmael\Arabs and the innermost layer of the exile, the exile of the “*Erev Rav*.” For the source on “exile of the *Erev Rav*”, refer to *Gra* (the Vilna Gaon) in *sefer Even Shelaimah* available at the bilvavi website.



The Greeks came to defile the *Beis HaMikdash*. It added a new dimension to exile: that even when we have *Eretz Yisrael* and a *Beis HaMikdash*, we are still susceptible to danger.

Normally, exile is defined by the fact that we are exiled from *Eretz Yisrael* and forced to live outside the land. But the Greek exile was a new kind of exile: that even when we are in *Eretz Yisrael*, and even when we have a *Beis HaMikdash*, we can still be in exile. It wasn't just a side thing. It defined the whole Greek exile.

What was the concept of the Greek exile? It is defined by the fact that they came and defiled the *Beis HaMikdash*, contaminating all the oils for the *Menorah*. Their entire purpose was to come and contaminate our holiness. They went straight to the *Heichal* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, so that they could contaminate the oil for the *Menorah*. They came to the holiest site, with specific intentions to ruin the holiness.

It didn't begin with that. It really began with the decrees against certain *mitzvos* such as *Shabbos*, *Bris Milah*, and *Rosh Chodesh*, as our *Chazal* tell us. But it still didn't look so bad, because everyone thought that they weren't really in exile, because after all, the *Beis HaMikdash* was still around. So although decrees were being made against us, decree after decree, still, people thought it wasn't so bad – because we still had the *Beis HaMikdash*.

What indeed is the difference between the Greek exile with the other exiles? The difference was astounding. During the other exiles, when we were exiled from *Eretz Yisrael* and we had no *Beis HaMikdash*, we knew we were in exile. But during the Greek exile, it did not seem to us that we were in exile, because we were in *Eretz Yisrael*, and we had a *Beis HaMikdash*.

The Greeks came to contaminate the oil – this did not just mean that we had a technical problem in that the Greeks had all the oil. It was all a result of what came before that. Olive oil (*shemen*) is seen by our Sages as a symbol of wisdom (*chochmah*); the Greeks had control over all the oil, both on a physical level as well as on a spiritual level. They succeeded in confusing the wisdom and minds of our nation, with all their secular thinking. When the Greeks affected how we thought - that was how they were able to physically control our oil as well.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was the holiest site, but it was also the place that can contaminate everything [when it becomes contaminated]. If a person thinks that this was just another random detail in the Chanukah story, he is missing the whole point. When the Greeks came to contaminate the oil, their real intentions were that they wanted to destroy the holy power of thought which the Jewish people possess.

The Jewish people were first conceived in Hashem's thoughts, and the Greeks wanted to destroy that too. When the Greeks affected our holy power of thought, they were really damaging the entire holiness of Jewish souls. That was the depth of the matter of how they contaminated all the oils.

## *The Greek Exile Reappearing In The Current Exile*

If we reflect a little, the “exile of the *Erev Rav*” that we are in includes all of the other exiles with it, and that is the depth of the current exile.

When a person reads about the words of our Rabbis concerning the exile, he can know at least on an intellectual level about what kind of problem we find ourselves in, how our minds are being threatened. But even more so, the depth of the exile is that evil can enter even into the holiest places. That was the uniqueness of the Greek exile, and since our current exile includes the Greek exile, our current exile also contains that disturbing kind of evil: our very holiness is being threatened. The evil influences of the nations can spread into even the holy places and contaminate holiness.

In our times as well, it can be said, *rachmana litzlan*, that the nations are coming and contaminating our holy places. Only one jug of oil was found, and it was hidden in the ground. So too, in our times, the Greek exile is here with it. The real evil is that Jewish minds are being contaminated by the secular influences.

## *Depth of The Current Exile*

When these words are absorbed, we can begin to realize what kind of situation we are in. First of all, we are in an all-inclusive kind of exile, which includes aspects of all the exiles, with all of the secular influences. But even more specifically, we are in an exile that resembles the Greek exile, for we live in *Eretz Yisrael*; and the exile that we are in is not only taking places in the streets, and in the buildings of secular people who make decrees against the Torah. Our very holy places are being contaminated by the modern influences, which are disturbingly reminiscent of the nature of the Greek exile.

It is not only the “*Heichal*” of the *Beis HaMikdash* hundreds of years ago which is being contaminated. **Every *shul* and *beis midrash* in this generation is being contaminated by the secular influences!** When a Jew walks into a *shul* or *beis midrash* nowadays, his mind is becoming contaminated from all of the secular ideas he hears about!

In this exile, “*Erev Rav*”, which includes in it the Greek exile, we find ourselves facing Greek influences all over again. But worse still is that the current exile includes all of the exiles – it includes all of the secular influences of every nation. Those influences are coming into every *beis midrash* and *shul*!

A person is learning Torah in a *beis midrash* or davening in *shul*, and thinks that he’s being protected by the fact that *shuls* are called a “*mikdash me’at*” (abode of holiness) he is in, and that all the impurity is the street, while he’s safe and sheltered from it. After all, he is in middle of learning or *davening*, immersed in spirituality...

But the Greeks were able to contaminate the *Heichal*. If they can contaminate the *Heichal*, surely they can come into every *shul* and *batei midrash*. What this causes is the following: **the initial way of thinking of the average Jew who lives in our times is a contaminated kind of thinking.** It is because the whole air around us is impure.

It's clear to all that there's impurity outside in the streets. But it's not clear that the impurity of the streets has entered the *shuls* and *batei midrashim*. The secular *de'os* (ways of thinking) have entered our circles and are ruining the mind of a Jew. The *daas* of the Torah has become exiled to the impure *daas* of the other nations.

We must know that all people, except for a few rare individuals - their minds have been contaminated by secular influences; even if they are found in the *shuls* and *batei midrashim*. One who doesn't try to find the "jug of oil" in our times – meaning, if he doesn't search for truth – he will not see the truth.

But the real difficulty is that people don't even realize that there's a problem. If we would know that there was an exile, everyone would cry to Hashem and beg Him that we attain a pure mind and have real *daas*. But people think that exile is only in the streets, not in the *shuls* and *batei midrashim*; a person is confident that his *de'os* are truthful. This is the depth of the exile; our *de'os* are being mixed up by the gentile nations, and we don't even realize.

If we would list all of the untruthful *de'os* that are affecting us nowadays, there would not be enough time. But we must know one thing: In the depth of exile we are in, in the last couple of years (it's hard to say when exactly it started), **the secular nations have succeeded in uprooting the entire proper Torah perspective** which *frum* people used to have. Not only are they making financial decrees against those who learn Torah; that is just the external part of the decree. They are uprooting all *de'os* of even those who learn Torah, and they are doing so to groups of people here and there; it all adds up.

They are taking away the proper *de'os* which we received as tradition from our forefathers. They have even succeeded in causing us to doubt the most basic fundamentals.

Anyone born into this generation is a "*tinok shenishbob*" (captured child) among the nations, even if he is born into a Torah family, because there are very few *de'os* today which are truthful. In the Chanukah episode, only one jug of oil was found; the message of this is that nowadays, it is rare to find the truth, even in the Torah world.

The actual words of Torah, of course, are never contaminated, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes. But in our souls, the words of Torah can definitely become hidden from the person, when his real mind is ruined by secular thinking.

If one would research all his *de'os* in his mind, he would discover how much he has become influenced by secular thinking.

## *A Spiritual Holocaust Taking Place In Our Midst*

The words here are harsh - but it is the reality which we find ourselves in.

In previous generations, they were in a physical Holocaust. In this generation, we are in middle of a spiritual Holocaust. The spiritual Holocaust is not only affecting those who have gone off the *derech* and taken to the streets; it is affecting even us who are in the *beis hamidrash*! The true *de'os* are being uprooted, and the holiness of the Jew's soul is being extinguished.

It is all because of what the influence of the *Erev Rav* is doing; because people are connected with "the heads of the *Erev Rav*". And there is no end to how much damage they can cause when they enter our circles.

When the Torah world becomes connected with the outside world – via the influences of the *Erev Rav* – the "heads of the *Erev Rav*" can mix together *Chareidim* with those who aren't *Chareidim*. How do they have the power to do this?? The answer is: Because there is no more *Chareidi* society! The *Chareidi* society is already gone! There are only a few G-d fearing individuals left. It's all gone, it's all destroyed.

We must understand that their influence upon is a holocaust to us! Someone born into this generation is being born into a spiritual holocaust, no less than someone born into the generation of the Holocaust that was 50 years ago. The Jewish people are being burned; everything is burning! Maybe in our physical situation, there are some who are surviving. But in our spiritual situation, the souls of the Jewish people are being burned! Each individual must realize how much the ways of our fathers are being given up in favor of the secular influences.

The words here are just a brief description of the problems of today's exile. The depth of the exile is that each day, Jewish souls are being burned. There is no safe place anymore. Even the "*Heichal*" itself is being contaminated. It is not an external kind of impurity going on; it is the kind that enters the Jew's mind and ruins it.

## *The Only Hope*

Every opinion that enters our minds needs to be carefully researched to see if it's truthful or not.

The truth must burn in our hearts. We need to daven and cry out to Hashem, from the depths of our hearts: "Save me from this generation that I am in, from all the impurity that is everywhere! Help me get through this lifetime properly!"

One must know the depth of the exile we are in – that there is no more *Chareidi* society anymore, except for a few rare individuals who fear Hashem. The only thing that we can do in this generation is to connect ourselves truthfully to Hashem, and one who is connected to Hashem, and he makes sure to have *mesirus nefesh*, he resembles the heroic *Chashmonaim* of history.

Although we each have our various ups and downs in our spiritual level, we can still remain all the time connected with Hashem and pray to Him all the time that we remain connected with Him. We must be very afraid of the situation that we are in right now, because of the spiritual danger that surrounds us; that fear is what can protect us.

May Hashem end this exile and bring *Moshiach*, speedily in our days, *Amen V'Amen*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Refer also to Tefillah #085- Erev Rav Today and Derashos #0103 – Surviving Spiritually. See also Tefillah #093- Media Influence and Tefillah #094- Seeking Advice . Refer also to the Rav's series of Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus Practice and the clip of Eretz Yisrael Today.

## 9 | *Fights of Chanukah*<sup>29</sup>

### *Fights Are Inevitable*

After we ask Hashem in the blessing of **ראה בעניניו** that Hashem should see our suffering, we ask Hashem, **ריבה ריבנו** to “fight our fights.” On Chanukah and Purim as well, we ask Hashem to “fight our fights” for us.

There are generally three kinds of fights (*merivah*) that occur. Man and woman get into fights with each other, because woman is sometimes called *rivah*, strife; therefore, husband and wife encounter fights with each other. Another kind of fight takes place within oneself - our own desires fight and clash with each other [when we are not sure what we want]. Another kind of fight is when we fight our *yetzer hora* (evil inclination).

We all have fights. It is impossible for us to go through life without encountering fights, because our soul has a nature to fight with opposition. The only issue is what kind of fight we will have. When we don't express our need to fight in a healthy way, it will manifest itself in an unhealthy and evil way.

In the future, there will be peace upon the world, and our soul will be at peace as well. But for the time being, there is no revelation of true peace on the world, and therefore, we need to undergo certain fights. That is our current situation; fights are part of our life.

We have the power of *bechira* (free will) to decide if our fights will mainly be with our *yetzer hora* - or if they will be with people. If a person fights his *yetzer hora* a lot, he will fight a lot less with others. If he doesn't fight his own *yetzer hora*, he will end up fighting a lot with other people and with his own family, because his soul demands some kind of fight.

The words of the *Chovos HaLevovos* are well-known – the main fight we have on this world is with our *yetzer hora*.

What does it mean, though, that we are asking Hashem to fight our fights for us, **ריבה ריבנו** ?

### *When Does Hashem Fight For Us?*

The world is full of wars, some bigger and some less. But every day, there are wars. Since the beginning of Creation, there has been war and strife. The first strife in Creation was between Kayin and Hevel – on the first day of Creation, there was already fighting. How many people have died since the beginning of this world due to strife!

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-067-fights-chanukah>

If we would have Hashem fight our fights for us, everything would be different. However, in order to merit Hashem's help in our fights, we need to fight in the proper way. If we don't have the proper perspective on fights, we have no right to ask Hashem to fight our wars for us.

The power to fight, *merivah*, is mostly being used in the world for evil. Fights usually stem from bad *middos* – mainly from the traits of jealousy, desire, and seeking honor, which are the three negative traits that “take a person out of the world”.

In the war against the Greeks, they discovered a flask of pure olive oil. This hints that their fight emanated from an inner purity; if not for their pure motivations in why they fought, they wouldn't have merited to find the flask of pure oil. They were willing to have *mesirus nefesh*, and from that inner recognition, they fought the Greeks. They fought with purified *middos*. In the times of Mordechai and Esther as well, they fought with pure intentions. The wars fought on Chanukah and Purim represent the true kind of fight: that when we have to fight, we need to do so with pure intentions, and not out of a superficial desire to fight those who challenge us.

But the fights in today's times are mostly stemming from all kinds of selfish interests – either out of jealousy, desire, or to seek honor. When this is the motivation of people when we fight, we don't have the right to ask Hashem to fight our fights for us.

### *Fighting Along With A Hope For Peace*

If a war is all about winning, this is not a true kind of war, and we can't ask Hashem to assist us in such wars. If a person doesn't have a wish that there should be peace in the world, he does not have the correct perspective on wars and fights. He fights for the sake of fighting and winning, and not because he wants to arrive at peace with his challengers.

The inner essence of life is really peace; it is the inner point in the soul. The nature of the soul is to be peaceful. The soul also has the deep ability to pursue the truth – and to fight for the truth - but truth is meant as a vehicle to arrive at peace. When truth is not used as a vehicle to get to peace, then pursuing the truth is destructive to the world, because when peace isn't the goal, the goal is instead about victory over the enemy.

Although the true power of peace will be revealed in the future, that doesn't mean we cannot access the power of peace in our times. We can still access it and reveal it somewhat.

However, to *only* pursue peace is also detrimental. We are living in a world which is a mix of good and evil, and it is mostly evil; if a person only pursues peace, and he does not fight for truth, then he will wish to connect with the entire world, even with those who are totally evil. This is detrimental. A person must not use the deep power of peace to seek peace with the evil in our times. Instead, we must access our power of peace by desiring deep down that there should be peace in the world.

If we do not bear in mind this perspective as we fight for truth, our fights for the truth will be destructive. The world cannot survive on truth alone; we need both truth and peace together. “Truth and peace met.” Moshe epitomized truth, and Aharon epitomized peace. We need to fuse both abilities together. In order to really use the power of pursuing truth and to fight for it, we need to have the goal of peace in the equation.<sup>30</sup>

We must make the following internal clarification. We all fight; that is our nature. However, just because this is true does not mean that we should ignore the goal of peace. Most of the wars and fights in today’s times are not being conducted with any peace, and they certainly don’t bring peace. But if we can fight in a holy manner, like the wars we fought on Chanukah and Purim – and this can only be done when it is together with the understanding of peace.

If a person doesn’t have a yearning for peace in the world, his power to fight will be turned to evil uses. His fights will stem from bad *middos*, and he resembles Korach’s fight, which was for evil motives.

### *How To Deal With A Fight*

We all have fights as we go through life. Sometimes we choose to fight, and sometimes we are dragged into a fight against our will – whether it comes to fights with our family members, or with our neighbors, etc. There is no way to go through life scot-free from any fights, because all of us will inevitably end up in some kind of fight.

In whatever fight we find ourselves in, though, we should always make sure that we have a desire that there should be eventual peace, even as we are in middle of going through the fight.

*Chazal* say that the *yetzer hora* gets stronger every day, and if not for Hashem’s help it is impossible to defeat.<sup>31</sup> The depth behind this is that Hashem’s peace is the most powerful weapon against all our fights. The way to merit it is when we have a desire for peace, even as we are fighting the opposition.

We must try to avoid fights and strife as much as we can, but all of us inevitably will get into fights. Even Moshe *Rabbeinu* was placed into a fight, with Korach. Even Aharon, the paradigm of peace, did not always have peace; he gave the idea to make the Golden Calf because all of the fighting that was going on. And they were fighting with him too in the process. So inevitably, all of us encounter fights. However, although this is true, we need to make sure that we have a deep desire for peace. When we find ourselves in a fight, we must desire peace at the same time. This is the true way to fight, which the *tzaddikim* all fought with.

This is a matter that requires deep reflection. This was always a point that needed to be considered, but in our generation especially, where there is much war and strife going on, this matter

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<sup>30</sup> Refer to Tefillah #089 - Truth and Peace Together

<sup>31</sup> Sukkah 52a



needs tremendous attention. If a person doesn't make this reflection, he will lose both this world and the Next World, in his ignorance towards this concept.

The sensible way is to seek both truth and peace together. As we fight, we must wish there could be peace too.

Even when we had to fight the Greeks, who created the Greeks? Hashem created them. We were only to win over them because we realized that they were *Hashem's creations*....

May we merit that Hashem should fight our fights, and that He should reveal onto the world “the vessel which holds all blessing – the power of peace”.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For more on this concept, see *Getting To Know Your Soul: Part II: Chapter 10: Netzach: Lasting Victory*.

## 10 | *Light and Darkness Together* <sup>33</sup>

### *When The Darkness Is Total, The Light of the Menorah Begins*

The days of Chanukah are described as days of “light.” The *halachah* is that we light the *menorah* only after it is confirmed dark, after sundown<sup>34</sup>, precisely so that the light of the *menorah* can light up the darkness.

The lighting of the *menorah* reveals a new kind of illumination, which it is not simply to be understood in the same way that the light of the sun “lights up” the day. We light the lights of Chanukah when the light of the sun has gone, in order to reveal a **new, unique** light in its place.

### *The Light of The Menorah On Chanukah Counters The Greek Darkness*

The Greek exile is referred to as “darkness.” At the beginning of Creation, the *Torah* states that there was “nothing but darkness upon the waters of the earth”. The Midrash<sup>35</sup> says that this darkness represents the Greek exile, who “darkened” the eyes of the Jewish people with their decrees, for they said, “*Write on the horn of a bull that we have no portion in G-d of Israel.*” In another place, the Sages refer to the Greeks as a “great darkness”.<sup>36</sup>

Through the *menorah* lights, a “great light” can come and conquer the great darkness of the Greeks. This is not just in the same way that light of the sun can penetrate darkness; rather, it is a light that is above the regular light.

### *Greek Wisdom: The “Beauty of Yefes in The Tents of Shem”*

The source of the Greeks’ power stems from their ancestor *Yefes* [oldest son of *Noach*].

When *Yefes* and *Shem* covered their father’s nakedness, *Yefes* was rewarded with beauty, and *Shem* was rewarded with the Torah that would come from his descendants. The Sages said, “*The beauty of Yefes shall dwell in the tents of Shem.*”<sup>37</sup> In other words, at some point, there is a connection of *Yefes* with *Shem*, which is why their influence is such a challenge to us today.

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-007-light-darkness-together>

*This is a very deep drasha built on a multitude of deep concepts*

<sup>34</sup> *Shabbos 21b*

<sup>35</sup> *Beraishis Rabbah 2:4*

<sup>36</sup> *Shemos Rabbah 51:7*

<sup>37</sup> *Megillah 9b*

If *Yefes* would have been totally alienated from our life, we wouldn't have to fight their influences. But the fact is that *Yafes* is here with us today- right now. *Yefes* is allowed to dwell in the tents of *Shem*, and for this reason, we have an *avodah* to sift out the good from the bad in all of the influences that we receive. At the same time, it is forbidden for us to learn Greek wisdom, and in this aspect, we have to fight their influences totally. Thus, there is a part of *Yefes* that can be accepted by us, but there is another part of *Yefes* that is forbidden.<sup>38</sup>

### ***What The Greeks Inherited From Their Ancestor Yefes***

The parts of *Yefes* which may be accepted into the Jewish people stem from the fact that *Yefes* did a noble act in covering his father *Noach*. The entire praise of *Yefes* was that he covered his father. On a deeper level, the Greek nation that descends from *Yefes* received this power to “cover.” *Yefes* used this power for holiness, but his descendants, the Greeks, use this power for evil.

The Sages describe the Greeks as being a “darkness”, and darkness is the power to cover and conceal. Clearly, the Greek darkness means that their power to “cover” is used for evil, for purposes of concealing holiness. On the other hand, *Yefes* is praised for covering his father. This was the same power to “cover”, but *Yefes* used it for holiness, which his descendants took this power and used for evil.

*Yefes* covered his father's nakedness; the entire concept of nakedness only came after the sin, for only after the sin did Adam and Chavah become ashamed of their nakedness. Modesty was a concept that was introduced as a result of the sin, because before the sin, there was no concept of nakedness.

There are two concepts of coverings: before the sin, and after the sin. After the sin, Adam and Chavah covered themselves with fig leaves. When *Yefes* covered his father's nakedness, this was a kind of modesty that came after the sin of Adam; when a covering is used to cover nakedness.

At the giving of the Torah, we returned to the level of before the sin, but with the sin of the Golden Calf, we fell back to the level of after the sin, and the concept of being ashamed over nakedness returned. Thus, the Greek concept of covering nakedness came back with the sin of the Golden Calf; it enabled the Greek nation to nurture their power to “cover”. When the *Chashmonaim* defeated them, they essentially defeated this “Greek darkness”.

### ***Modesty Before and After The Sin***

There are a few ways how the “Greek darkness” can be vanquished.

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<sup>38</sup> See *Tefillah #090 – Purpose of Our Exile – Understanding Others*

The simple approach is: “*A little bit of light can push away a lot of darkness.*”<sup>39</sup> This is one approach, and it is true. This is the simple idea of Chanukah: to illuminate darkness.

But the deeper understanding is as follows. There was a kind of darkness that existed before the sin<sup>40</sup>, and there was a darkness that came after the sin [which we are currently in]. Darkness, in essence, is a power to conceal and hide something.

This entire concept of “covering” is really the concept of modesty, which only came into Creation after the sin. Modesty is needed when something is proper to be kept hidden. For example, “The Jewish nation are a holy people, and therefore they do not have marital relations during the daytime”.<sup>41</sup> The time when marital relations are proper is nighttime – a time in which there is darkness, covering, concealment, privacy, modesty. But the entire nature of concealment, which is the idea behind modesty, is an idea that only came into Creation as a result of the sin.

But where do we find the holy roots of concealment/covering/darkness, which existed before the sin? Hashem made a separation between light and darkness. Rashi explains that Hashem saw that it won't be good if light and darkness are allowed to be mixed together, and therefore He separated them. But before the separation, light and darkness were mixed together. Darkness, in its original form, was mixed with light, and this is the original and pure kind of darkness.

It was not a kind of darkness that existed for the purpose of covering; thus, it is not a kind of darkness which needs to be fought. *Gehinnom* and strife were only created on the second day, but on the first day of Creation, there was no strife yet, even though darkness existed on the first day. Therefore, we see that the original state of darkness, on the first day of Creation, was not a darkness of strife. It was a higher kind of darkness.

On the second day of Creation, strife was created when the Lower Waters sought to overpower the Upper Waters. When strife entered Creation, the idea of disparity entered, resulting in Hashem separating light and darkness from each other. It was then that the idea of opposition between the Jewish people and the Greek nation began conceptually. But before the second day of Creation, light and darkness were together, and there was no concept yet to disassociate yet from darkness.

The first day of Creation thus contained a kind of darkness which did not have to be fought, in which darkness can be together with light and there is no opposition between them.

### ***The Victory of The Chashmonaim: Returning To The Original Darkness***

Now we can understand the depth behind the victory of the *Chashmonaim* over the Greeks. It wasn't simply because “a little bit of light can dispel a lot of darkness.” In waging war with the

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<sup>39</sup> *Chovos HaLevovos: Shaar Yichud HaMaaseh: 5; and also in Rabbeinu Bachye: Beraishis 4:7*

<sup>40</sup> For more on the “original darkness” of Creation and how it pertains to the soul, see also *Getting To Know Your Torah #06 – Difficulty In Learning.*

<sup>41</sup> *Kesubos 65b*

Greeks, the *Chashmonaim* were able to reveal the original darkness of Creation, the root darkness, in which darkness and light were together. When the root of darkness is returned to its root, revealed is a point which is above war which is the ultimate victory.

The superficial viewpoint is that there was a war between light and darkness, a war between the Jewish people and the Greek nation, a war between the light of the Jewish people with the Greek darkness. But the inner perspective of the war was that it returned to darkness to its root, to its upper source, to the original way it looked on the first day of Creation. And since this original darkness became revealed – the kind that was originally mixed with light – it followed that there could be no more war. The power of the Greeks who tried to uproot our holiness was eliminated.

### *The Power of Mesirus Nefesh*

The power of darkness/concealment which came **after** the sin is the kind of darkness of Yitzchok *Avinu*, who was blind.

Because Yitzchok was blind, his vision was covered, so he was affected by the darkness that came after the sin. Yaakov *Avinu*, however, did not become blind in old age; rather, his vision became heavy upon him, but he was still able to see.

The depth behind this was because Yitzchok represents *gevurah*/strength, which implies war, thus, he was affected by the darkness which came after the sin, which is the kind of darkness that needs to be fought. But Yaakov *Avinu* represents the middle point between Avraham and Yitzchok, therefore, he did not suffer the blindness of Yitzchok that came from his blindness/darkness.

The *Midrash* states that when Yitzchok was on the Altar, the angels were crying, and their tears went into his eyes, which blinded him. The *Midrash* also brings that because he gazed at the *Shechinah* when he was on the Altar he was punished with blindness.

This was really the deep rectification of the blindness. The test of the *Akeidah* was a revelation of *mesirus nefesh* of Yitzchok *Avinu* – he was ready to die for Hashem. The Sages state that a person merits to see Hashem in death.<sup>42</sup> When Yitzchok was ready to die for Hashem, it was as if he saw the *Shechinah*. This was a kind of seeing, and it resulted in his blindness. This was a kind of “darkness” that was mixed with light.

### *Holiness Is To Be Separate*

What exactly does it mean that light and darkness are mixed together? What does it mean that the *Chashmonaim* returned the darkness of the Greeks to the original state of darkness, in which light and darkness were mixed together, and thus there was no more point of war?

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<sup>42</sup> *Toras Kohanim Vayikra 1; Kallah Rabbasi 3*

Before we bring the answer, we need the following introduction.

The *halachah* states that the lights of the *Menorah* have holiness and, therefore, we have no permission to benefit from them – we may only look at them<sup>43</sup>. Even though, there is an argument in the *Gemara* concerning this<sup>44</sup>, the *halachah* is that we are not allowed to benefit from them. We are only allowed to see them.

What is the concept of holiness? Rashi and Ramban (in *Parshas Kedoshim*) describe holiness as a concept of being “separate”. The same can be said of the holiness of the *Menorah* lights – they are above our level of understanding, therefore, we have no permission to benefit from them.

There are two kinds of seeing: (1) One kind of seeing is when we use light to see with, like when we read next to the light. In this scenario, using the *Menorah*'s light for his own personal benefit, is forbidden. (2) Another kind of seeing is when you see it as holy, when you see it as something that is above your comprehension, and you are aware that it is more exalted than you. We are allowed to see the Chanukah lights with the second kind of vision: to just see it, and no more.

This alludes to how the *Chashmonaim* rectified the Greeks whose wisdom is a kind of wisdom that we can comprehend with human understanding. The wisdom of the Torah, by contrast, is not able to be comprehended through human wisdom alone. It is like the original darkness of Creation, which was mixed together with light.

### ***Greek Wisdom Is Tangible Wisdom, Torah Is Inner Wisdom***

How can it be that the original form of light and darkness were able to co-exist together? Why don't the light and darkness cancel each other out?

When a person sees something and he knows he can't reach it, he cannot use it, even though he is aware of it. This is like light and darkness together; the light is here, because he can see it, but the fact that he can't reach it is a degree of darkness. When one can see something but he can't understand it or reach it, that means he is really missing the inner view of what he is seeing; he sees the external layer of what he's seeing, but he can't see the internal layer of what he's seeing.

When we see the lights of the *menorah*, all we can do is see them on a physical level. We can see them, but we cannot benefit from them – meaning, we can see them on a physical level, but we cannot see the inner essence of the light.

This describes the difference between the wisdom of the Greeks and the wisdom of the holy Torah. Greek wisdom is a kind of wisdom that is tangible. The Ramban<sup>45</sup> wrote that the wisest of all the Greek philosophers (Aristotle) was skeptical about spirituality, because he didn't see it. By contrast, the wisdom of the Torah, when we learn it, we know that we are barely scratching the

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<sup>43</sup> *Orach Chaim* 673:1

<sup>44</sup> *Shabbos* 21a

<sup>45</sup> *Kisvei HaRamban*: “*Derashas Toras Hashem Temimah*”

surface; all that one knows about the Torah is only about the external layer of the Torah, but the inner essence of the Torah's wisdom cannot actually be comprehended.

This is the deep meaning of “light and dark mixed together.” Whatever we do know about the Torah's wisdom is what we see, but we know that there is always more depth to it, for it is written, “*It is vastly deep, who will find it?*”<sup>46</sup>

This is darkness at its holy root.

### ***Darkness “After” The Sin***

When a person falls to a sin, *chas v'shalom*, it is upon him to understand that he is in a darkness which conceals him. The *Gemara* says that if one cannot overpower his evil inclination to sin, he should go to a place where no one recognizes him, don sackcloth and cover himself with black garments.<sup>47</sup> In other words, sin must be covered.

The sin of Adam is what produced the need for modesty, which is the power to conceal; when a person sins, it is a revelation of the covering and concealment that the first sin produced.

But concealment at its root is good and holy. The holy kind of concealment, which was around before the sin, has nothing to do with sin.

Holy concealment is the mere fact that a person cannot comprehend the essence of Hashem – a person cannot get to the depths of the Torah, for “Hashem and His wisdom are one.” Shlomo *HaMelech* declared, “*I said I would try to understand it, [but] it is far from me.*”<sup>48</sup> When a person tries to learn the Torah's wisdom, he is viewing its light, but he sees that he cannot understand the depths of the Torah's wisdom, and this is darkness to him. This is the “light and darkness mixed together.”

This does not mean to imply that one should give up on trying to understand the Torah, *chas v'shalom*. The Torah is not only a darkness – it is light together with darkness. Thus, we have a *mitzvah* to delve in it all day and try to understand it, but at the same time, we must know that its depths are far from us. It is both light and darkness together.

### ***The Sage Who Wanted To Learn Greek Wisdom***

The *Gemara*<sup>49</sup> brings that one of the Sages knew the entire Torah, and he asked his teacher if he can learn Greek wisdom. His teacher showed him the *possuk*, “*And you shall immerse yourself in it [the Torah], day and night.*” He said to him, “Find a time which is not day and not night, and then you

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<sup>46</sup> *Koheles* 7:24

<sup>47</sup> *Kiddushin* 40a

<sup>48</sup> *Koheles* 7:23

<sup>49</sup> *Menachos* 99b

can learn Greek wisdom.” Rashi explains that since there is no time which is not day and not night, therefore, there is no permission granted to learn Greek wisdom.

We can ask: Why didn’t his teacher just tell him that it’s forbidden? The response of the teacher implies that there is such a time in which it is not day and not night; what is the meaning of this?

The deep understanding is as follows. The *mitzvah* to light *Menorah* is after sundown, and the time of lighting lasts preferably [*l’chatchilah*] until passerby’s are no longer walking in the marketplace. It is really the time in which darkness and light are mixed together, because it is the time of twilight (*bein hashemashos*) – the time in between day and night. It is complicated to discuss the status of the time of *bein hashemashos*<sup>50</sup>, but with regards to our discussion here, it is a time in which the sun has already gone down, yet it is not totally night time. The time in between day and night is the time to light the *menorah*.

Thus, when the teacher said to go find a time which is not day and not night, he was really referring to the time of lighting the *menorah*. That is the time in which one can draw forth the strength to defeat the influence of Greek wisdom, through “darkness and light mixed together”, which is darkness at its root – which can rectify the nature of Greek wisdom. When the holy root of darkness is revealed, the darkness of the Greeks has returned to its root, and that will enable a person to learn Greek wisdom; meaning, Greek wisdom is like a branch cut off from its root – it is darkness without any light in it.

### ***The Elements Which Conceal: Earth and Fire***

From the words of our Rabbis we can see that there are two elements which bring darkness. There are four elements – fire, wind, water, and earth. Water is naturally clear, so it does not conceal. Unless you make water dirty, the water itself remains clear, and it does not conceal things. Wind does not either conceal, because we can see clearly through the air.

The elements of fire and earth, however, are both elements which conceal. The earth covers the dead in burial, and fire turns things into coal, which is dark. So each earth and fire can cause concealment. But there is a difference between them. When earth covers something, it covers it totally blotting out any light from entering. But when fire causes concealment, at least the light of the fire doesn’t allow for a total darkness. So fire resembles light and darkness mixed together.

When you think about it, the study of the nature of the world, which is Greek wisdom, is really the study of the earth. Thus, studying nature is a kind of darkness which is total, because studying nature is really involving oneself in “earth”, and this prevents a person from knowing about inner and spiritual wisdom.

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<sup>50</sup> See *Tur and Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim: 672*



On the other hand, the element of earth reveals the potential of the other elements<sup>51</sup>, so earth can both conceal as well as reveal. The Greek darkness resembles the element of earth, for it is a total darkness that causes total concealment. It is rectified through the higher kind of darkness, which comes from the element of fire, in which light and darkness are mixed together. The Torah is likened to a fire<sup>52</sup>, and it is also called “black fire on white fire”<sup>53</sup>, because the light and darkness mixed together that is the Torah is what can rectify the darkness of the Greeks.

### *The Eighth Light of Chanukah*

The miracle of Chanukah was that the oil of the *menorah* lasted for eight nights. In the *Menorah* of the *Beis HaMikdash*, there were seven lights, while on Chanukah we light eight lights, in the *menorah*. What is the source for lighting the eighth light?

How can it be that we light eight lights, when the *Menorah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* had only seven? The *Menorah*'s light represents the source of all light in Creation – so if all light is modeled after the *Menorah*, how can it be that we light more than what the actual *Menorah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* was?

Rashi<sup>54</sup> states that in the evening, the wicks from the Western Light were removed, placed in the Kohen's hand or in a vessel, and the wick would continue to burn from the oil that was absorbed in it; as this was going on, a new wick and oil replaced the old one, and then they would relight the new wick from the old wick, and from the new wick they would proceed to light all of the other lights of the *Menorah*.<sup>55</sup>

From these words of Rashi we can find a hint to the concept of the eighth light. The Western Light was split into two different lights as it was being replaced – there was a new one and an old one burning at the same time. The old wick, as it continued to burn after being taken out of the *Menorah*, is really the root of the concept of the eighth light in the *Menorah*.

The Maharal<sup>56</sup> though finds a different source for the eighth light in the *Menorah*: there was a light coming from the Aron in the Holy of Holies (*Kodesh Kodashim*), and there was a light coming from the *Menorah* in the Sanctuary (*Heichal*). The *Aron* is from the word *ohr* (light), because the *Aron* contained its own light.

This was like an eighth light – it was a level of light above the seven lights of the *Menorah*.

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<sup>51</sup> as the Maharitz writes in the glosses of *sefer Nefesh HaChaim*

<sup>52</sup> *Yirmiyahu* 23:29

<sup>53</sup> *Rashi Devarim* 33:2, *Midrash Tanchuma: Beraishis: 1*

<sup>54</sup> *Shabbos* 22b

<sup>55</sup> This follows the view of Rashi, but *Tosafos* concludes differently.

<sup>56</sup> *Ner Mitzvah* p.23

## *Inner Modesty – The Root of Understanding Torah*

The source of *ohr*/light is called “*Torah Ohr*”, and Torah is light and darkness mixed together. Hashem is concealed yet revealed, and so is His Torah concealed yet revealed.<sup>57</sup> There is an aspect of revelation in the Torah, as well as an aspect of concealment in it [as it was explained here].

The days of Chanukah, the war between the *Chashmonaim* and the Greeks, is a war of how to define darkness. {Do we want} to have the darkness that came after the sin (Greek darkness), or the darkness which came before the sin (light and dark mixed together). When the *Chashmonaim* won, they revealed that concealment is not only used for modesty, which comes to conceal that which should be covered. They revealed that there is more to darkness than just covering.

The root of modesty is contained in these words of *Chazal*: “The holy names [of Hashem] are not revealed except to one who is modest and humble.”<sup>58</sup> Modesty is the tool to understand the hidden<sup>59</sup>. Modesty, which is really the power of darkness/concealment, at its root, is to reveal the hidden. In order for the hidden to become revealed, it needs a container that is hidden; thus, modesty is the hidden container that can contain revelation.

*Chazal* say that nighttime was created for sleep, (and this refers to the kind of darkness which came after the sin), and *Chazal* also say that daytime was only created for learning Torah.<sup>60</sup> Now that we are after the sin, darkness is used for sleep, but at its root, the nighttime/the darkness is the time in which a person can reach into his innermost depths, and this is the holy kind of darkness.

## *Modesty And Women*

The *mitzvah* to light *Menorah* is on “a man and his household”.<sup>61</sup> A person without a home is exempt from the *mitzvah*<sup>62</sup>. Thus, lighting *Menorah* includes the whole family, not just the person himself.

Women do not light, unless the husband is not home<sup>63</sup>; the reason why women are exempt is because “a wife is like his body<sup>64</sup>”, therefore, a married woman is included with her husband when he lights.<sup>65</sup> Another reason brought<sup>66</sup> is because “*the entire honor of a daughter of the king is on her inside*”, [so it is not modest if she lights]. The Vilna *Gaon*<sup>67</sup> says that the nature of a woman is to be

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57 Zohar Achrei Mos 71b

58 Kiddushin 71a

59 For more on modesty, see *Understanding Your Middos #013 – Modesty In-Depth*

60 Eruvin 65a

61 Shabbos 21b

62 Shabbos 23a

63 Mishna Berurah 671:9

64 *ibid*

65 *ibid*

66 Chasam Sofer to Shabbos 21b

67 Igeres HaGra

modest; the level of a woman's spirituality is determined by how modest she is, because the inner depth of something is what defines it.

### *The Light of Chanukah: The Depth of Increasing Shalom Bayis*

The *mitzvah* of lighting *menorah* is on “man and his household”, and the wife is called the “home” of her husband<sup>68</sup>. The depth of this is because the light of the *menorah* is light and darkness mixed together; it is not simply a light that comes to dispel the darkness, because if that would be the purpose, then the obligation would be separately upon man and woman. But lighting *menorah* is the light of “light and darkness mixed together”, which was the light of the first day of Creation, and on the first day of Creation it was “one day”; husband and wife are commanded to become “one flesh”, which reflects the oneness of the first day of Creation, in which light and darkness were together as one.

In other words, the concept of lighting the *menorah* symbolizes the connection between “man and his household”. The *Gemara*<sup>69</sup> discusses, which takes precedence - Shabbos lights, or Chanukah lights (if one only has enough money to purchase one of them)? The *Gemara* answers that Shabbos lights take precedence, because Shabbos lights were established by *Chazal* to bring *shalom bayis* (marital peace) to the home, and *shalom bayis* is more important than Chanukah.

This needs understanding: Does *shalom bayis* push away all other *mitzvos* as well? It cannot push away a Biblical *mitzvah*, but there are times when it can push away a Rabbinical *mitzvah*. But the deeper reason why *shalom bayis* is more important than Chanukah is because the entire purpose of lighting *menorah* on Chanukah is “man and his household”, that there should be marital peace; lighting the *menorah* is all about *shalom bayis*.

### *The Two Purposes of Lighting The Menorah*

There are really two aspects to lighting the *menorah*. It is lit to spread the miracle of Chanukah (*pirsumei nisa*), and in this sense, it can be understood as “a little bit of light that pushes away a lot of darkness”. The light of the *menorah* spreads outward into the night and illuminates it.

But in a deeper sense, the *menorah* is lit inside the home, which implies that it is also meant to light up the home from within. This is the exact idea behind lighting the *menorah* of Chanukah, which is an obligation of “man and his household” – a *mitzvah* about *shalom bayis* – in which light and darkness can be mixed together yet be harmonized.

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<sup>68</sup> Yoma 2a

<sup>69</sup> Shabbos 23b

May we merit from Hashem to return to the source of darkness, the holy and original kind of darkness, in which light and darkness were mixed together – to the “one day” of Creation which come [once again] with help from Heaven, and reveal the only One of the universe.

## 11 | *Miracles Within*<sup>70</sup>

### *Miracles – When Nature Is Overcome*

On Chanukah, we make a blessing of *שעשה ניסים לאבותינו*, expressing our thanks to Hashem for this time where He performed miracles for us. Although we also experienced miracles on Pesach, only the Rabbinical festivals of Chanukah and Purim contain a blessing where we thank Hashem for the miracles performed, which we express in the prayer of *Al HaNissim* in *Shemoneh Esrei*.

Hashem runs the world through a system of laws He created which we know as “nature” (*teva*), and He also built into this a system that works above the normal laws of “nature”: miracles (*nisim*). Hashem has allowed the laws of “nature” that He created to be the system of the normal “laws” (*chukim*) which He runs the world with.

When we analyze Creation deeper, there are actually different kinds of “nature” in creation. There are four classifications in Creation: the non-living objects (*doimem*), plants (*tzomeiach*), animals (*chai*), and people (*medaber*). Each of these has their own specific natures. Human beings, animals, plants, and animals each have their own specific kind of “nature”.

Each of the creations has their limitations. If Hashem enables a rock to grow and have life to it, it would be a miracle for the rock, because the nature of a rock is that it cannot grow. If Hashem were to allow a plant to move from place to place like an animal can, this would be a miracle for the plant, because a plant’s nature is that it does not grow. If an animal is allowed by Hashem to talk, such as the donkey of Bilaam who was allowed to talk, this is a miracle for the animal, because an animal’s nature is that it cannot talk.

Thus, what is the depth of a miracle (*nes*)? It is when a different “nature” is revealed in something. A miracle is not simply that Hashem changes the rules. Rather, as the Ramban and others explained, the definition of a “miracle” is when a lower level creation is allowed to function on a level that is normally above its natural level. When a rock can grow, when a plant can walk, when an animal can talk, these are all miracles, because they would be functioning on a higher level than they are normally on. Thus, in the days of Chanukah, we experienced “miracles” in the sense that a higher level of creation was revealed within this lower realm that we dwell on.

### *Becoming Uplifted To A Higher Level*

When one has a difficulty (*nisayon* \ניסיון), either his *avodah* is to find a way to run away from it (וינס), such as what happened with Yosef when he had to run away from the wife of Potiphar; and

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<sup>70</sup> <http://bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-055-miracles-within>

sometimes the *avodah* of going through a *nisayon* is to bear through it and thereby become uplifted from it (להתנוסס).

When the family of the *Chashmonaim* had to go to war with the Greeks, it was a *nisayon* for them, and they passed the test, becoming uplifted from it and rising to a higher level than before. That was the miracle. The *Chashmonaim* faced some difficulty in their *avodah* in their own individual souls, and because they passed the difficulty, they were elevated to a higher level, where miracles were performed for them.

In clearer terms, as mentioned earlier, a miracle is when a lower level creation is allowed by Hashem to function on a higher level. This can apply within human beings as well: what is considered nature for one person might be considered a miracle for another person, and vice versa. If Shimon is on a lower spiritual level than Reuven, and Shimon rises to the level of Reuven (which is a natural level for Reuven to be on), this is a miracle for Shimon.

Thus, every year when Chanukah returns, where the spiritual light of “miracles” is revealed, this does not simply mean that the miracles of Chanukah are revealed to us in the very same way it was revealed to us last year. Rather, the definition is that if we have risen to higher levels since a year ago, last year’s miracle isn’t considered a miracle anymore for us, because it has now become our natural level.

The spiritual light of the miracles are shined upon us during this time of the year, as our Sages explain, but the depth of this concept is that it depends on the level we have reached since last year. If one has passed more *nisyonos* (difficulties) since last year, he merits a greater level of “miracle” this year, because now that he has become more elevated since last year’s level, the miracle of last year is now his natural level, and he is now ready to receive greater miracles than the year before.

### *Overcoming Our Own Personal Natures*

Applying this to us on a personal level, every person has his own “natures” which Hashem has implanted into his soul. There are four elements contained in our various “natures”: fire, wind, water, and earth. These are the roots of our negative *middos* (character traits). Fire is the root of conceit and anger, wind is the root of idle speech, water is the root of seeking hedonistic pleasure, and earth is the root of sadness and laziness, with their branching traits.<sup>71</sup> These are the natures of our *middos*. When one works to improve his *middos*, he is really working to uproot the various natures that Hashem has implanted in him.

The *nisayon*, the difficulty of man, is to rise above his nature contained in the animalistic layer of the soul (the *nefesh habehaimis*)<sup>72</sup> - which will not improve on its own; just as an animal dies with the natures that it is born with.

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<sup>71</sup> *Shaarei Kedushah (Rav Chaim Vital), 1:1*

<sup>72</sup> *as explained extensively in sefer Tanya, Nefesh HaChaim, Derech Hashem, and Maharal*

The Vilna Gaon says that if a person does not break his negative *middos*, there is no point of living. In other words, a person must work on himself to uproot the nature of his negative *middos*. In other writings of our sages, working on one's *middos* means to acquire a "second nature". But the depth of it is for one to break his very nature and to subjugate it, so that it slowly changes, and eventually the "second nature" that one acquires becomes his "first" nature.

Thus, it can be said that the *avodah* of a person is to rise above his own nature that he was born with and to elevate himself to a more "miraculous" level than before. When one changes his natural level, this is a *nes*\miracle, just as Hashem performed a *nes* when He redeemed us from Egypt, where He changed nature for us. Just as Hashem runs the world through nature and also through miracles, so does our soul contain nature and miracles. Everything that exists in the world and in time exists as well in our own souls<sup>73</sup>, so if there can be miracles in the world, there can be miracles in our own soul as well.

This is referring specifically to our *avodah* of working on our *middos*. We have certain natures we are born with, which manifest in our negative *middos*, and when we deal with our *middos* and we deal with this *nisayon* – instead of running away from it, we deal with it and face it, by changing our nature – this elevates us from nature to miracles.

After that, what used to be considered a "miracle" for one's personal level will now become "second nature" to him.

### *Changing A Personal Nature*

To give a clear example of this concept, the nature of a person is that he is concerned for his own gain, and he feels competition with others who are getting in his way. "A craftsman hates those who are in his craft." A person in the business will naturally feel competition with his competitor and he won't love him. A person loves himself more than others and he will naturally put himself before others. His attitude will always be, "*Chayecha Kodmin*" – "Your own life comes first." But when one works on his *middos*, on changing his nature, he will become more at peace with others who compete with him, and his love for others will grow, replacing the hatred he once had for them.

What used to be his "nature" has now changed for him, if he has worked on changing his natural *middos*; he has now risen to a "miraculous" level.

And vice versa: what used to be considered a "miraculous" level for him to access (in this case, to be able to love even his competitor) has now become "second nature" to him. As his love slowly grows for his competitor, he rises to a more "miraculous" level than before; it is a miracle for him, for a miracle is anything that goes above one's natural level.

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<sup>73</sup> *Sefer Yetzirah* 3:1

### *Harmonizing The Opposite Forces Within The Soul*

When one reaches a more elevated, “miraculous” kind of existence, he is able to harmonize together contradictory forces within himself.

To give a simple example of this, the earth and the heavens are opposite realms of each other. On this earth we live in, fire and water cannot exist together. When fire and water meet, there is a clash of the elements, and one of them will overpower the other. But in the upper realms that extend beyond this earth, fire and water are united. The Gemara says that the word “*shomayim*” (heaven) is a combination of the words *aish* (fire) and *mayim*<sup>74</sup> (water), which hints to how fire and water can co-exist in the heavens. It would be a miracle on this earth if water and fire can co-exist together. By the story of Eliyahu HaNavi at Mount Carmel, fire and water came down together from heaven, and that was a miracle on this earth. In the heavens, though, it is natural for fire and water to be together.

Thus, what is a “miracle” on one level can be “nature” on another level, and what is “nature” for one level can be a “miracle” for another level. It is natural for fire and water to exist together in heaven, while this is a miracle if it were to happen on earth.

A person, within himself, also has the ability to harmonize together his opposing, contradictory forces. That is a revelation of a “miracle” for the soul, and then this miracle becomes second nature to him, where it is no longer miraculous. In the example we brought of one who was used to hating his competitors, he is able to develop a love for them, and he has able to transform his character traits of hatred, jealousy, and competition into their opposite: love. This is but one example of a miracle that can take place in the soul, and there are many more examples as well, of this concept.

By the miracle with the family of the *Chashmonaim*, where the “few overcome the majority, the impure were defeated by the pure, the wicked were defeated by the righteous” – the depth of the Chanukah miracle was because the *Chashmonaim* must have overcome their own nature, and that was precisely how they merited miracles.

How do we see that the *Chashmonaim* overcame their nature? They were “few against many”. When a person sees that he is outnumbered, his nature is to feel incapable of winning. When going out to war against our enemies, the Torah commands those who are afraid to return home, because they will not be able to fight in the war when they are afraid. Human nature is to be afraid when we were outnumbered by enemies. But the *Chashmonaim* went to war with the Greek army even though the odds were against them; they went against human nature to be afraid.

Simply speaking, they received *siyata d’shmaya* (assistance from Heaven), and that was how they succeeded. But there is really for a deeper reason. They realized their natural limitations, and indeed they were afraid, but they were able to penetrate into a deeper part of their souls, which felt *emunah* in Hashem, and they felt the belief that Hashem is in charge and that He can fight our wars for us and defeat our enemies.

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They knew that they could not naturally win. But the light of *emunah* was shining in their souls, and it penetrated into even the physical, animalistic layers of their soul. When a person's *emunah* is strong enough, it can uplift even the *nefesh habehaimis* and elevate it to a higher level, filling it with confidence that it can defy one's natural limitations.

When there is such a "miracle" within one's own soul, it is only "natural" that there will be miraculous results. The miracle that happens afterwards in the physical realm is a result of the *inward* miracle which has just taken place in one's *soul*.

That was what happened with the *Chashmonaim* – because they reached a miracle within themselves, by elevating their *nefesh habehaimis* to have firm *emunah* that Hashem can save them, they merited miracles in the physical realm, because they had now become elevated to the level of miracles.

### *The Depth of The Miracle With Finding The One Pure Jug of Oil*

Now we can understand the following deep point.

The *Chashmonaim* found the jug of pure olive oil sealed by the *Kohen Gadol*, amongst all the many oils that were contaminated by the Greeks. Besides for the simple understanding of why this was a miracle – the fact that they found one jug of oil that was still pure – there is also a deeper meaning to this miracle.

There are many layers to a person's soul. When a person works on his character and he uproots his own natures, he uncovers deeper parts of his soul, which shed light onto the external layers of the soul and raises them to higher levels. The external layers of the soul can be improved by the inner layers of the soul that a person reveals. The inner layers of the soul are really a person's inner nature, which has been concealed all along until he improves himself and he uncovers it. In the inner layers of the soul, there is a more inner nature of a person, which contains vast strength. This is also referred to as the "*Aisan*" (giant) of the soul, the true inner strength of the soul, which has no fears and it is fully reliant on Hashem's help.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* explains that when a person firmly establishes in his mind the knowledge that there is nothing besides for Hashem and that only He is running the world (*Ain Od Milvado*), he receives Hashem's protection. When one truly reaches this deep place in the soul, the external layers of his soul are removed, and are replaced with the inner layers of the soul.

This was the depth behind the one jug of oil that was found by the *Chashmonaim*. The "one jug of oil" they found represents the inner essence of the soul, which was revealed to the *Chashmonaim* then, where they overcame the external reality and they revealed the inner reality, within themselves. What was at first concealed from them now became revealed to them. They found their own inner essence, which is above nature, above the power of the Greeks who were operating within nature.

On a more inner level, the war of the Jews against the Greeks represented the war of Greek *chochmah*, their wisdoms and ideologies, versus the holy *chochmah* of the Torah. The Greeks were on an agenda to make the Jews forget the Torah, and when the *Chashmonaim* found the inner essence of their own souls, they merited an elevated existence, of miracles, and this is what is represented by the jug of oil that they found.

### *The Inner “Jug Of Oil” In The Soul*

Such a jug of oil could never be “found” by the Greeks – and that is the depth of why they weren’t able to find it and contaminate it. It wasn’t simply because the Greeks overlooked that jug and that the Divine Providence of Hashem arranged for this to happen. It is true that it was all Divine Providence, but the Divine Providence was only activated because the *Chashmonaim* revealed a deep *emunah* in their own souls.

The *Chashmonaim* removed their own nature contained in their *nefesh habehaimis*, and they revealed the purity of the *neshamah*, which can never be touched by impurity. This deep place in the soul of the *neshamah* is the “oil” which the Greeks can never “find”. The Greeks would never be able to see it in the first place. Even if this one “jug of oil” would be sitting in front of the Greeks when they pass by it, it would be invisible from them. This is because the inner essence of the Jew’s soul cannot be seen by any forces of impurity.

The same would be true for a Jew who hasn’t yet uncovered his own inner essence, and he is still living life on the level of the Greeks. He would also not be able to find this one “jug of oil” in the *Beis HaMikdash*, even if it would be right in front of him. The only one who can find this one “jug of oil” is one who has uncovered his own inner essence. He has already found it within him, so he wouldn’t have to go looking for it anywhere.

This “jug of oil” within is the true “oil” of these days of Chanukah. But it is only revealed to one who connects himself to the level of the *Chashmonaim* throughout the rest of the year, when he works to overcome his own nature. When one overcomes his nature and he rises to the next level in character improvement, he finds a true “jug of oil” there. It is not the oil you see in the physical world; it is an inner purity found in the depths of the soul. It is hidden and concealed deep in the soul of a Jew. The more has uncovered his own inner essence during the rest of the year, the more it is revealed to him the inner “jug of oil”.

This “oil” is essentially the fact that the Jewish people were “the first thoughts of Hashem” before Creation, as the Sages state. A gentile therefore can never know of this pure, untouched “oil” in the Jew’s soul. The wisdom of the Greeks was at war with the wisdom of the Torah, but this war only exists on an external plane, where wisdom is pitted against wisdom; the Torah’s wisdom is but its external layer. The inner layer of the Torah, the actual essence of the Torah, cannot be attacked by any outer forces. The inner layer of the Torah is the intrinsic essence of the Jewish people, who were the first thoughts of Hashem before creation. Nothing can attack that point.

In the external dimension of Creation, in the external layers of the soul, there is a war between good and evil. There is a rule of “The shell comes before the fruit” (*kelipah kodemes l’pri*), and similarly, “there is no light unless it is preceded by darkness”, but this is true only in the external dimension. When one reaches the inner essence of his soul, there is no longer a battle between the forces of light and darkness in the soul; of that point it is said, “*Even as I sit in darkness, Hashem is a light to me.*” The “beginning point” of Creation, the fact that the Jewish people are Hashem’s first thoughts that preceded creation, is above all the concealment and darkness.

### *Two Facets To Chanukah*

This is a deeper understanding of Chanukah than what we explained earlier.

One facet of Chanukah, as we explained until now, is that if one has worked during the rest of the year to uproot his own natures and to reveal his inner essence, he merits more revelation of miracles during these days of Chanukah. He finds the “one jug of oil” within.

But even more so, it brings a Jew into his “beginning point” of the soul, the fact that he was part of Hashem’s first thoughts before creation, and then he reveals a new beginning for himself. His own first thoughts, and his own will, will become aligned with Hashem’s thoughts and Hashem’s will.

### *Reaching The Depth of the Soul*

When one reaches that place of his soul, there are no outer, impure forces that can attack him there. Evil cannot take hold there. To reach that place in oneself, we explained that one needs to work on uprooting his own natures, and to reveal more and more inner layers of his soul. How far, indeed, will one have to go into his soul, in order to get there? The first step, trying to uproot one’s nature, is a concept that anyone can work on, as long as he desires true life. It can be worked on by anyone who wishes to change, on any level he is on. At any level that a person is on, he can work on uprooting his nature and to reveal more depth of his soul.

But what is the end point that one should strive for? That is a higher level, which not everyone can reach. It is a lofty place in the soul for one to reach, where one truly realizes the “beginning point” of his soul, realizing that he is the first thoughts of Hashem and that his own first thoughts are aligned with Hashem’s will, where he is not even struggling with the evil influences. That is a very high level to reach, a place of *peshitus* (simplicity) in the soul, where one’s entire *ratzon* (will) in life is to do Hashem’s will, and he does not even entertain any thought otherwise.

### *The Inner Point Is Above Oppositions*

On the outer layers of our existence, we are at war with the evil in Creation, and it is there that it is said, “There is no light that is not preceded by darkness.” There we have to contend with the

forces that seek to bring us down spiritually. This is also the depth behind why we begin to light the Menorah specifically at sundown, until the time where passerby are no longer walking in the streets; to fight the darkness with light.

But when we reach the deeper dimension of the Menorah and the oil, there our thoughts and desires are aligned with Hashem's thoughts and will; our "first thoughts" that enter our mind will be aligned with Torah (this is also called *Ruach HaKodesh*).

That is the depth of the spiritual illumination that is contained in the days of Chanukah. But as we have explained, this is a very lofty level, and it is the end goal of all our *avodah*. Yet, in spite of this, we must try to realize it somewhat even in the beginning of our *avodah* – for we need to have the aspiration of "*sof maaseh, b'machshavah techilah*" ("the end of action is first in the thoughts").

### *Practically Speaking*

Applying this concept on a practical level: What should be the order of steps a person should take when it comes to this? The order is as we explained until now. The first step is that a person must work on himself to uproot his nature, and then what used to be a "miraculous" level for him becomes nature.

As an example, at first when a person begins to exert his mind in Torah, he has a hard time grasping it, and his comprehension in Torah is weaker. But as he perseveres, the "gates of wisdom" become opened to him<sup>75</sup> and he begins to understand his learning better. The miraculous levels then become more natural to him, and they are no longer miracles. It becomes easier for him to learn Torah with understanding, and it is not as difficult for him anymore. This is just an example of the concept, but it has more general applications in one's *avodah*.

As a person works on himself and he merits uproot his natural *middos*, and he uncovers more of his inner essence, on a more continual basis, where his growth is more permanent and it is not just temporary where it feels like a miracle, but it has become more natural and permanent in his life.

This is the depth of *הזהה בזמן הזה*, where the "miracles" have more permanence in his life. When one changes his nature and he reveals his inner essence, what used to be a "miraculous" level for him now becomes "natural" to him.

### *When Miracles Become Nature*

The more a person merits, with help from Heaven, to overcome his nature, to change the natural bad habits he was born with, the more it becomes natural for him to live a more miraculous kind of existence, where the miracles within his inner character are no longer miracles, but nature.

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<sup>75</sup> As written in a letter of the Chazon Ish, in *Kovetz Igros Chazon Ish (vol.I)*

It then becomes a natural part of his life, and he reaches deeper and deeper kinds of miracles within his inner character – until he eventually reaches the deepest place of the soul, where one truly believes that it is only Hashem Who runs everything, where His light fills all of existence. That is the goal of all our *avodah*, and it will be fully realized in the times of Mashiach, when Hashem's light will fill all of existence and bring equilibrium to all of Creation.

This is the depth of the statement of the Sages, “All the festivals will cease in the future, except for Purim”, and some of the opinions in the Sages included Chanukah as well in this statement. In other words, the fact that miracles can become nature to us is a revelation of the light of the future, which will never cease. That is the depth of why Chanukah will never cease (according to these opinions of the Sages).

The parts of Chanukah will cease in the future are the parts of our inner journey which we must traverse for the time being, which is but the external dimension of Chanukah. The deeper dimension of Chanukah, where it is realized how miracles can become nature, is the part of Chanukah that will never cease.

### *In Conclusion*

May it be the will of Hashem that it be fulfilled in our times the time where miracles fill all of the world, where it will be revealed the deep, simple nature of the Jew's soul, which desires to do Hashem's will.

## 12 | *The Fire of Chanukah*<sup>76</sup>

### *Three Kinds of Inauguration – The Altar, The Temple, and The Wall of Jerusalem*

“Chanukah” is called so because it is the day where they rested on the 25<sup>th</sup> כ"ה חנוכה, “they rested on the 25<sup>th</sup>” of the month. But there are many facets of understanding to the root of Chanukah.

The word “*chanukah*” means, to “inaugurate”. There are different kinds of *chanukah* inauguration that we find. There was the *chanukas mizbeiach*, a new inauguration of the *mizbeiach* (the Altar), which took place both in the times of Moshe, by the *Mishkan*, and in the time of Shlomo HaMelech, in the *Beis HaMikdash*. There was also a *chanukas habayis*, a rededication of the *Beis HaMikdash*, which took place in the second *Beis HaMikdash*. There is also a bigger kind of “*chanukah*”, which was the dedication of the *chomah* (the wall) that surrounded Jerusalem. In the book of Nehemiah, it is recorded the event where there was a dedication of the wall of Jerusalem.

Those are three kinds of *chanukah* (inauguration) which we find when it came to something holy: the *chanukas hamizbeiach* (the dedication of the Altar), the *chanukas habayis* (the dedication of the Temple), and the *chanukah hachomah* (the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem). We also find this concept in the side of evil. In the book of Daniel, it is described that when Nevuchadnezzar made an engraved image, he made a *chanukah* inauguration to celebrate it. But the root of all inaugurations began with the inaugurations of the altar, the Temple, and the wall of Jerusalem.

The Greeks damaged the Altar when they invaded the *Beis HaMikdash*, and this was one of the main damages that they caused. They made holes in the *Heichal*, and they also vandalized the Altar by damaging it. Even later when there was a *chanukas habayis* of the second *Beis HaMikdash* on Chanukah, the *chanukas habayis* was damaged from the start, due to the damage that the Greeks had done to the Altar. And the *chanukas hachomah* also received damage, for the wall of Jerusalem was broken later by our enemies.

The broken *chomah* (wall of Jerusalem) is in need of rectification, no less than how the *Heichal* needed to be fixed after it was vandalized by the Greeks.

### *Remembering The Wall of Jerusalem – Through Lighting Menorah*

When we light Menorah, clearly, it is not the same as the lighting of the Menorah that was in the *Beis HaMikdash*. The Sages did not enact that we should light menorah in Jerusalem by the entranceway to the *Beis HaMikdash*; they enacted that light it on the entranceway, outside of the

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<sup>76</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-053-fire-chanukah>

house.<sup>77</sup> What is the reason for this? The simple reason is to make known the miracle (*pirsumei nisa*). But the deeper reason is so that we can create a *chomah*, a spiritual “wall”, to surround our house.

The depth behind why we light the Menorah at the entrance to the doorway is, as the Gemara says, so that there should be a “*mezuzah* on the right and the *menorah* on the left, so that we should be surrounded by *mitzvos*”. In other words, lighting the *menorah* is about creating a spiritual light that will surround the home [like a wall].

Being “surrounded by *mitzvos*” doesn’t just mean to be engaged in *mitzvos*; it means that the home be enveloped in a spiritual light formed by the *mitzvos*. The obligation of *mezuzah* is on the home, whereas the obligation of lighting *menorah* is upon “man and his household”. The light of the menorah doesn’t just “surround” the person who lights it; it surrounds the home, by lighting it at the entranceway. It forms a “wall” to surround the home.

The opening of the home requires protection, because that is where things can enter. One way to protect the home is through *mezuzah*, and another way of how the home is protected is through the wall that would guard the city. Nowadays we do not have that wall, but we have a remembrance of it, through the *menorah*, which celebrates the *chanukas hachomah*, as we explained.

### *The Wall of Fire In The Future, Manifested In Our Own Times*

It is written, “*With fire I destroyed it and with fire I will build it in the future, and I will be a wall of fire surrounding it*”. The light of the *menorah* on Chanukah will not cease - according to the opinion in the Sages that all of the festivals will cease except for Purim, and some say Chanukah as well. The fact that Hashem will be a “wall of fire” in the future refers to the light of the menorah of Chanukah, which will not cease in the future.

Thus, lighting the menorah creates a “wall” of light, of fire. Just as *mezuzah* protects the home from harm, so does the light of the menorah protect the home, acting as a wall of fire that cannot be penetrated.

Our holy *sefarim* explain that the Chanukah is a light that comes from the future which is allowed to shine within our own current dimension. The three Biblical festivals that we have (Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkos) are about commemorating the past; to remember the exodus from Egypt. But Chanukah and Purim are celebrating the future. The light of the future revealed on Chanukah is the light of the future protection we will merit from Hashem, where Hashem will be “wall of fire” for us.

The miracle of the *Chashmonaim* was that they were “few against many”, and in addition, “the impure were given over to the pure”. It is understandable that it is a miracle where the few overcome

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<sup>77</sup> Editor’s Note: There are differing customs today in halachah as to where we light the menorah; on the outside of the entranceway, on the inside of the house by the entrance, or by the window.



the majority, but the fact that the impure were given over to the pure was an altogether different kind of miracle, which was entirely otherworldly. In the World To Come, all impurity will be removed, as the prophet says of the future, *“And I will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth.”* Thus in the victory of the Chashmonaim where the impure were given over to the pure, it was a miracle that reflected the light of the future, where there is no impurity. That light of the future was shining in the present, during that miracle.

Chanukah is a light of the future which reveals to us a protection. This is also the depth of how the one jug of pure oil was found. The Greeks didn’t defile it, because they couldn’t. It was protected, as if there was a wall of fire protecting it. The light of the future protects our purity even in the present. It wasn’t simply that one jug of oil wasn’t touched - rather, that one jug of oil was protecting us.

The “wall of fire” of the future is not like fire we see today. It will be like the burning bush, where the fire did not singe the bush. That was the same fire and light of the one jug of oil that lasted for eight days, when it should have only lasted for one day. There are many ways to understand how it lit for eight days, as is well-known; but the depth of the matter is that it wasn’t a normal fire which burns whatever it touches. It is a “fire that does not eat fire” as the Gemara in Tractate *Yoma* describes. This is the fire which burned on Chanukah for eight days, and it was from the fire of the future, the “wall of fire” of Hashem that will protect us, which does not destroy, but serves only to protect.

Thus, the question is not how the oil could last for eight days - rather, the question should be how it didn’t burn for more than that (since it was eternal). It lasted for eight days because that is the natural characteristic of the fire of the future. If so, why indeed did it stop after eight days? It is because the light of the future can only be allowed to shine in our current era on a temporary basis. The light of the future was allowed to be clothed under the guise of our current times. But the fire itself which shone was not bound to any time; it came from a different dimension, which is not bound to the normal rules of time from our own dimension. It was above time.

That was the light of the Chanukah which was allowed temporarily to shine in our own times. The fire of the future belongs to the future, that is where its light is, but it can be shined into our own times, where we can enjoy some of its illumination.

### ***The Fire In Our Soul – The Light of Torah Learning***

When it comes to our own personal soul, we also have our own, inner “fire” – the element of fire that is in the soul.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *The soul contains four elements – earth (sadness and laziness), water (lusts and desires), wind (idle speech, falsity, mockery) and fire (conceit and anger). Here the Rav is explaining a more esoteric and spiritual use of the soul’s inner fire. To learn more about the basic aspects of the element of fire, refer to the Rav’s series Fixing Your Fire: Conceit and Fixing Your Fire: Anger.*



The nature of fire is that it rises. A Torah scholar is compared to fire, and the Torah itself is compared to fire. *“Are My words not like fire, so says Hashem.”* The Greeks tried to make us forget the Torah and when the Chashmonaim won the war, the Torah was restored to its glory, where it is known as the “fire” of Hashem. That was the light\fire that was revealed on Chanukah.

The Torah itself was shining during that time, and that was the light of Chanukah which was shining then, which helped them destroy the Greek evil and be returned to the Torah. From that victory the true light of the *menorah* was allowed to shine where we could receive its light.

The *Aron* (the Ark) which held the tablets of the Torah, is called so from the word *ohr* (light). The *ohr* that was in the *Aron* was what allowed the light of the Menorah to be lit. The Menorah cannot survive by itself; it gets its light only if there is an *Aron*. When there was a miracle where the oil in the Menorah lasted for eight days, it was really the light of the future that was being allowed to shine, the fire of the future, and it was really coming from the Torah of the future, which was allowed to be shining then (and it will soon be revealed in our times as well). *“A new Torah shall come forth from me”* – that is the light of Chanukah. It is the Torah which protects. In the future when there will be true and complete Torah in the world, that will protect us and serve as a “wall of fire” for us to protect us.

Thus, the light of the menorah which we light in our times, which is getting its power from the future, is dependent on the level of Torah that we reach from the rest of the year. With the more a person has connected to his Torah learning on a deeper level, the more he will accordingly merit the light of the Torah of the future that is “Hashem’s fire”, and that in turn will empower his own light of the menorah, to become a truer light.

Thus, the light of the menorah is being empowered by the light of Torah which is coming from the future, which is “shining” even now. The beginning of the menorah’s light is the Torah’s light. Although the light of the future is not yet here, at times it radiates into our own dimension, and we can receive its rays and enjoy some of the illumination.

It is this kind of Torah that can protect a person. This is a light from the future, it is not yet here, but it can be shined into our own dimension. It is that fire which is activated when we light the Menorah. The lighting of the menorah is but a result of this previous light; the menorah’s light is not the beginning point of the light. The source of the menorah’s light is empowered by the light of Torah that one has merited thus far.

We can see from the physical world that in order to light anything, you need to light it from something else. Every light or fire has an earlier source. When rocks are rubbed together, there can be a spark of fire. The Ramban says that Hashem created fire before the world, and the world was created from that fire; this original fire is unlike the fire that is created from rubbing together two rocks. It is that original fire which is contained in the words of Torah itself.

Applying this concept to ourselves practically, every person has an endpoint and a beginning point. The action that we do on Chanukah is to light the menorah, but that is just the endpoint; it is

not the beginning of the light. It is a result of something that came before it. We need to get in touch with the root of the light - the light of the Torah.

It will be received differently with each person, depending on the particular quality of Torah learning that he has reached; for as we have explained, it is essentially the light of Torah which is the source of the menorah's light.

### *Peaceful Fire – Returning To Our Root By Leaving Our Private Self*

We explained that this lighting does not come from this world, but from the light of the future. Now we can understand as follows.

Fire was discovered by Adam *HaRishon*, on *Motzei Shabbos*, when he needed a fire to illuminate the dark, so he rubbed together two rocks. Such fire represents the fire of dissension, where forces collide with each other. It is like the fire of Gehinnom that was created on the second day of Creation, a fire of *machlokes*, strife. But the fire of the future is not a fire of dissension; it is a peaceful kind of fire. When the *Chashmonaim* won, it wasn't from using a fire of strife, but a fire of peace (*shalom*). When a person has attained more peace, he merits the true fire contained in Chanukah.

The fire we recognize in our times is a fire of dissension, strife, and disparity – the fire of Gehinnom, the fire which Adam discovered on *Motzei Shabbos*, when it was after the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* and the holiness of Shabbos had left him. The true fire of Chanukah is attained on a personal level when one attains the true fire, which is the power of *shalom* (peace).

In clearer language, fire in the soul is the nature to ascend. There is both holy and evil ascension. Evil ascension is when a person wants to rise to higher levels for his own self-serving purposes. This is a fire of dissension. A holy kind of ascension is when a person wants to leave all elements of disparity and to return to his root. This is holy fire, the fire of the future, which the soul yearns for.

There are seven days of Creation which are parallel to seven branches that branch out from one root. The root of the seven, which is the "eighth", is essentially the oneness (*echad*) that binds together all seven days of Creation. The days of Chanukah are eight, which represent the oneness that binds together all seven days of Creation. That is the fire that is revealed on Chanukah. In terms of our personal soul, it is the yearning in the soul to ascend spiritually, to return to its root, where everything is united.

The fire of our current times, the kind of spiritual ascension that we often recognize, is a self-focused kind of fire\ascension. It is growth that is focused on one's own "I", like when "I" want to grow spiritually, for "my" own purposes. But the fire on Chanukah, which is the fire of the future, is a deeper kind of wish for ascension. It is about ascending higher in order to connect to our root. And it is hidden. It is like the one jug of oil, which was hidden.

It is the inner point in the soul where the *yetzer hora* cannot reach, where there is no war between good and evil inclinations, where there is no room for any disparity or dissension in any way; thus

evil cannot take hold there. There is only *shalom* (peace) there; there is only *achdus* (unity) there, and it is entirely the soul's yearning to connect to its upper root, where every Jew's soul wants to unite to.

When one reveals this inner fire in the soul, he receives a light on Chanukah which is the light of the future. If the fire in one's soul is being used for his own "I", and surely if it is being used for purposes of dissension with others, his fire on Chanukah is not the future fire, and it is rather a fire that is immersed in the past, and it is not of the future.

### *Leaving The Disparity and Entering Into Oneness*

Thus, Chanukah is really about living on a level of the future.

In clearer terms, in terms of time, we refer to "future" as something that did not happen yet in time. In the soul, the "future" is something that is above our current level. If we can rise to it, that is called the "future" in the soul. That is the "fire" of Chanukah.

The nature of fire is that it rises. In the soul, fire elevates a person to a higher level that he is not currently at. He is not on that level, but through the fire in the soul one can be raised to higher levels. It is to leave the "*alma d'piruda*" (the "world of disparity") and rise to the place of *achdus* (unity) in the soul. Chanukah shows a person that he can temporarily access the light of the future, where he can temporarily be above all the disparity and be instead in the higher dimension, where all is unified - *achdus*.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, the *menorah* is lit in the entranceway to be as a wall of fire that surrounds the home. The depth of this is that it unites all of the Jews in the city under one unit. That was the point of a city's wall which we used to have – it unifies everyone into one unit. It is outside the home, it is outside of one's current level, but it can surround him and connect him with all others, under one unit - under one "wall of fire".

Thus, Chanukah is a time where a person can temporarily leave all the disparity of this world and enter into *achdus*, ascending to his higher root where all is unified, riding the inner fire that is in his own soul.

### *The Jug Of Oil That Lasted For Eight Days – The Light of Oneness*

This is the deep understanding of how the "one" jug of oil could last for 8 days. It is one light, but it can light for 8 days – in other words, all 8 days were lit from a oneness. Thus, lighting the menorah on Chanukah is about remembering and revealing this light of oneness.

When only one jug of oil of pure oil was found, it was due to the protection of the fire of the future which was protecting that jug, as we explained. And what was that protection? *Klal Yisrael* as a

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<sup>79</sup> See also Tefillah #0166 – Leaving The Disparate View

whole has a guarantee of protection from Hashem. In the days of Chanukah, we received that protection. A person by himself cannot be guaranteed protection, but when he joins with the collective unit of the Jewish people, he receives the protection that is granted to the whole of *Klal Yisrael*.

Thus the victory of the *Chashmonaim*, on a deep level, was because they received this protection upon *Klal Yisrael*; they connected themselves to the unit of *Klal Yisrael* and that was how they were saved.

During Chanukah, there is a custom to give more *tzedakah* and giving to others. This is in connection with the deep unity that was revealed during Chanukah, for we became connected on Chanukah to the unit of *Klal Yisrael*.

If someone can be on that level during the rest of the year, that is wonderful; but even if one isn't on that level during the rest of the year, he has the opportunity on Chanukah to use its spiritual light and leave his own private existence and enter his root - which is the collective unit of *Klal Yisrael* - and to go beyond his own private self.

On Chanukah a person lights menorah and people can see into his window. Normally we may not look into another else's window; it is a breach in another's privacy and it is forbidden. But on Chanukah, there is a *mitzvah* precisely to see the lights in another's window. This is because on Chanukah, there is a revealed level of *achdus* (unity) in *Klal Yisrael*. If a person can touch upon this level even for a few moments, he is accessing the fire of the future, which can protect us now in our own times and which unites us all together.

This is the depth behind the jug of oil that burned for 8 days. It was a manifestation of oneness, of the future unity, and that was how it could keep going [until Hashem restricted this light after 8 days, as mentioned earlier].

This is the depth behind the spiritual illumination that is available on Chanukah.