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[Home](#) > Chanukah - 010 The Inner Light

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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^[1] 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^[2]. 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.

“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*^[3], 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”.^[4] 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.

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*^[5] 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 meritto prepare ourselves to reach the “*ohr penimi*” of Chanukah, which is the “*ohr penimi*” of Torah.

[1] The Hasmoneans

[2] Bava Kamma 2b

[3] novel Torah thoughts

[4] Yoma 9b

[5] Tractates of the Talmud

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-010-inner-light>