



# The Fire of Chanukah

## Three Kinds of Inauguration: The Altar, The Temple & The Wall of Jerusalem

“Chanukah” gets its name from the term חנוכה, “Chanu koi”, which means “they rested on the 25th” [of the month], but there are many facets of understanding as to what the root of Chanukah is.

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

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 we light it on the entranceway, outside of the house.<sup>1</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.

Similarly, 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

<sup>1</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.

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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 (inauguration of the wall of Jerusalem), as we explained.

## The Wall of Fire In The Future

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 “light” of 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, Shavuos, 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 a “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 overcame the majority, but the

fact that the impure were given over to the pure was an altogether different kind of miracle, which was of an entirely otherworldly nature. 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 Heavenly protection from Hashem. This is also the depth of how the one flask 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 flask of oil wasn’t touched - rather, that one flask of oil was protecting us.

The “wall of fire” of the future is not like fire that we see today. It will be like the burning bush which Moshe saw, where the fire did not singe the bush. That was the same fire and light of the one flask 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

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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>2</sup>

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 then 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 being allowed

<sup>2</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*.

to shine 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 is what will 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 be 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,

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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 the lighting of the Menorah is not a light that comes 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”: when “I” want to grow spiritually, for “my” own purposes, etc. But the fire on Chanukah, which is the fire of the future, is a deeper wish for ascension. It is about ascending higher in order to connect to our root. And it is hidden, like the one flask of oil that was found, which was hidden.

It is the inner point in the soul where the yetzer hora (evil inclination) 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. But, 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

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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>3</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 (unity), ascending to his higher root where all is unified, riding the inner fire that is in his own soul.

## The Flask Of Oil Lasted For Eight Days – The Light of Oneness

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

When only one flask of pure oil was found, it was due to the protection of the fire of the future which was protecting that flask, as we explained. And what was that protection? Klal Yisrael as a 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 flask of oil that burned for eight 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 eight days, as mentioned earlier].

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

חנוכה 053 מזבח בית חומה תשע"ז

<sup>3</sup> See also Tefillah\_0166\_Leaving The Disparate View

## Arranging Your Personal Book According To Topic

The next step is to create a list of topics about our inner world – the powers found in our soul – and to choose which topic we want to begin writing about. There are a few possible ways of how to begin choosing which topic to begin with.

**Possibility #1:** Take out a sefer which lists different soul abilities, such as *Pele Yoetz*, or *Orchos Tzaddikim*, or *Kuntis Shivim Kochos HaNefesh*, or any other sefer, and list the topics in alphabetical order.<sup>1</sup> After that, learn about all these topics methodically, and identify them in your own soul – working on one aspect after the other.<sup>2</sup>

**Possibility #2:** Pick one of these topics that's easiest for you to begin writing about. After that, move on to the next topic, and like this you can learn topic after topic.

**Possibility #3:** As much as you are able to, think about and identify your capabilities, personality, qualities, character traits, and feelings. Create a list of your capabilities. It may help to ask others around you which particular capabilities they see in you. After this, choose some topics from the list and try to begin the inner work process (using either possibility #1 or #2 mentioned above).

**Possibility #4:** Analyze something particular that you did today which was significant, and identify any particular capabilities, personality, qualities, character traits, or feelings that were involved in this action. Write them down, and then pick one or two topics (see possibility #2 above) and use them to begin the inner work process.

1 At this point, there is no need yet to start learning sefarim which discuss the aspects of the soul. It will suffice to just take a look at the table of contents of a sefer [i.e. sefer *Pele Yoetz* or *Orchos Tzaddikim*] and then write down this general information.

2 The sensible approach for most people is to begin working on one's positive aspects as opposed to beginning with one's negative aspects. So at this step, write down only your positive aspects that you identify.

**Possibility #5 (Advanced).** The following can only be implemented by a few individuals who are capable of a more advanced level of self-awareness – being aware of your “soul-movements” (existence, destruction, expansion, and contraction), an inner work which is deep, complex, and not for everyone practice. It is being mentioned here only for the sake of those individuals who can do this. As explained earlier (in Chapter 3), since all powers in our soul come from the 4 elements of air, fire, water, and earth (and another way of saying it is the 4 root movements of the soul, which are: existence, destruction, expansion, and contraction), write a chart arranged in columns of the 4 elements, and under each of each of the columns, write down any capabilities that belong to that column (You can take any particular capability and identify which element it comes from, either by taking notice of your character traits displayed throughout the day, or by seeing which particular soul movement you experienced.)

Then, choose a particular aspect on the chart (using either possibility #1 or #2 above) to begin the inner work process.

There is no need to force ourselves to do any of these options over the other. We must choose the one that works best for us. (This is because each of us is built differently and deals with different situations. For this very reason, we presented here different methods to work with).

We can also begin with one method and then after some we can switch to a different method, or we can integrate more than one method together, taking into account any personal factors (i.e. moods or any external factors).

**The main thing is – to begin.**

## Recognizing A Faculty In Our Soul

After we have created a list of our capabilities and we have chosen which particular capability we want to start

learning about and accessing, we need to learn how to **recognize** it and **write** about it in our notebook. This entails 2 steps - our **initial writing** on it, and later **skimming through our notes** on it. We shall now go through each of these steps.

## Step 1 - Initial Writing

In our first step in this, we shall be writing down any intellectual definitions and any feelings that we have about a particular aspect of the soul. First, open your notebook to the letter which you are choosing to start from. (There should be a section divider page with the letter on it, and then the letter again on top of the page you are starting from). Fold the page in half, so that you can have 2 divided columns: My Intellectual Analysis, and My Personal Feelings. If you prefer, you can have 2 pages, one for each of these columns.

The next step is to begin thinking of the topic you are writing about and then to give definitions to it, based on what you personally understand. After this, think about and identify where this aspect shows up in your own personal life. Then, write down how you define this particular aspect of the soul – how you define it intellectually, and how you emotionally identify with it.

For example, if you chose to understand the topic of **love** and to access it more, open up your notebook to the section where this topic is under (in Hebrew, love is *ahavah*, so it will be under the letter *Aleph*, and in english, it will be under the letter L, for “love”), firstly, write down how would define what love is. The next step is to identify this emotion in your life. Whom do you love? What are the things that awaken your love? How is your love expressed? What are the different kinds of love you identify? Write all of this down – how you define love, and where in your life you can identify love.

Another example: If you chose to learn about the topic

of **desire**, go to the place in your notebook where this section is under (in Hebrew, it will be under the letter *Tav*, for *taavah* (desire), and in english, it will be under D, for desire), and try to define what desire is. Next, identify things in your life that you have a desire for, which things awaken your desire, how your desires are expressed, and different kinds of desires that you identify. Write down how you define desire and where you notice it in your life.

You can do the same with any soul aspect that you are learning about and trying to access. Slowly, the notes that you jot down will add up and fill up the pages, until each section in your notebook is crammed with notes and essays on just one topic alone, and your personal book about yourself will be very informative to you.

This will take time and persistence from you, but it is the way to build your soul, with the more you are self-recognizing and self-actualizing [as you learn more and more about yourself, through writing down notes about particular aspects of yourself].

## 1a) Errors Help You Understand Yourself Better

Sometimes you will notice that you came up with a definition that wasn't accurate. Or, you realized that you applied certain feelings to it which were misplaced, and which would have been more appropriate for a different soul-aspect, but not the one you were writing about. Later you realized what the more precise definition was. When this happens, you should return to your notebook and write down your new conclusions and your new feelings about the topic (and any misplaced feelings on the topic should be written again in a different place where it belongs in).

For example, if you were learning about love and writing notes on it, at first you may have defined love as the enjoyable feeling that you get from certain things, and you

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may have even written down that you love certain foods. You had written down that love is defined as the enjoyable feeling you get from things you enjoy, such as ice cream. Later, you realized that love is deeper – it is a connection and unity with something. You realized that it's not that you “love” the ice cream and other foods you enjoy. Rather, you desire ice cream, and you feel pulled after it, but that's only because it gives enjoyment to your physical body, but not to your soul. Now that you realize that your love for the ice cream was not a real love but just a desire, go back to the section of “love” in your notebook and write down what your new definition of love is – right after your previous definition. Then, write down where your new definition of love (connection and unity) is expressed, and how loving ice cream does not express your new definition of love, and how it is really desire, not love. Then go to the section of “Desire” and write down that desire is defined as a pull towards something, and that you find this expressed in your life with the desire for ice cream.

Do not erase your previous, “mistaken” definitions from the past. Instead, write down after it “I used to think that this definition was true, and therefore I had written then what I wrote. But now I understand differently. I am now writing down my new conclusions.” Instead of scribbling out your mistaken definitions, you should merely write down that now you came to a new conclusion, and this is

because **the way that you will develop your soul is when you learn to see yourself as an ongoing process - a story that's unfolding** (see Chapter 6).

If you keep erasing your mistaken definitions from the past, you won't see the process of how you are growing and making progress. You won't see where you were in the past and where you are today. If you just keep erasing your mistakes and beginning again with your new definitions, this is like building a huge tower, then collapsing it, and then building it again, and then repeating the cycle again. In contrast, when you see how you understood something in the past and how you understand it today, **you learn about different aspects of your soul's personal journey and you recognize the story of your life.** You see how you have progressed, and this provides a wonderful and satisfactory feeling.

The truth is that in every step which we are progressing through, we are really discovering how what we have seen until now wasn't accurate. This is because **throughout every step that we grow to, we are revealing deeper layers in our soul, where we arrive at a more truthful and more precise view.** That being the case, it can be said that our errors in understanding ourselves is actually an inseparable part of the process of recognizing our soul.

**NEXT WEEK: Errors Help You Understand Yourself Better**



בס"ד

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