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## Chanukah - 018 Seeing the Beginning

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 Sukkot. 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. Sukkot is seven days, and then there is an “eighth day” of Sukkot, 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 – the Shabbos of before Creation [when there was nothing yet in Creation, and there was nothing but the oneness of Hashem][1], 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.

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.

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[1] For more on the "Shabbos of before creation", refer to the Rav's series on Shabbos Kodesh, in particular, the *shiur* of *שבת קודש 01\_שלוש שבתות* ( or in-אבנה משכן בלבבי מספר בלבבי משכן אבנה-in )

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/chanukah-018-seeing-beginning>