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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, "נר ה' נשמת אדם", "*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.

Every person is essentially a light contained within darkness. There is a statement, "A little light can push away much darkness."^[1] 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, 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 [\[2\]](#).

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 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.^[3] 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.

^[1] *Chovos HaLevovos: Shaar Yichud HaMaaseh: 5*

[2] Raavad (Rabbi Avraham ben David, 10th century scholar); based on the verse, *"From my flesh, I see G-d."*

[3] See the series of Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus

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