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Parshas MIKEITZ

The Chanukah Experience

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The Chanukah Experience

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.

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 *halacha* 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 though our soul sees spirituality, 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 as, “*Ner Hashem Nishmas Adam*”, “The flame of Hashem is the soul of man”. A *ner* (flame) is composed of a *kli*

(vessel), oil, and the fire. Thus, the *neshamah* is called “*ner*”; our *neshamah* is also called “*ohr*” (light), whereas the “*kli*” that holds the *neshamah* is the *guf* (body).

The *neshamah* is called “*ner*”. Our physical body is created from earth, whereas the soul comes from the “breath of Hashem”. Hashem is entirely *ohr*, so to speak. The earth which our body comes from is a dark material, thus our body is “dark”, whereas our soul is taken from “light”.

What is man comprised of? Man is made of a body and soul; he is a combined existence of darkness and light. Every person is essentially a light contain within a darkness. There is a statement, “*A little light can push away a lot of darkness*” – we see that a small light can light up a dark room. When our soul is concealed from us, we grope in the dark. When it is revealed, there is a great light.

When a person hasn’t yet revealed his soul, he lives in darkness. He experiences 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 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.” *Ayin ra* comes from the view of the body, and *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 – from the body, or from the soul.

Ayin ra is not simply dark, and *ayin tov* is not simply light. *Ayin ra* represents the body’s viewpoint, which is dark and materialistic, thus it does not offer a

clear view. *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. It is mostly dark. What is the world looking like right now? What is it calling out? It is calling out darkness, unhappiness, pain, and difficulty. It is not a place of mostly good, purity and holiness and happiness.

A person sees from the place in himself that he is at now. If you view life through dirty glasses, even if you see something clean you see dirtiness. Therefore, when a person sees others, he usually doesn't see people that he can connect to; he usually just sees the thick materialism of others, and as such, he relates to others as bodies, not as souls.

But when a person reveals his soul he sees others through a clear lens, and then he sees joy, purity, and cleanliness. This does not mean that he is naïve and that he's not aware of reality. He is well aware of reality, but he has a clean view of others.

For example, when he speaks with others, for example when asking someone for directions, he understands that he is speaking with a soul, not a body. He asks questions to others from his soul. 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. The Alter of Slobodka 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

Where he is speaking from in himself when a person speaks? A person can either talk from the most external part of himself, or from his 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 says "I love you", or "I feel your pain". It is referring to how a person speaks all the time – all 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 it from his body. But when a person speaks from his soul it can go into another's soul.

Chanukah is not just a time to light. Chanukah shows us that our soul is in our body. Other festivals are also a light, but they don't take on physical form. The light of Chanukah takes on a physical form – it shows 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. How does he do it? His brain allows it. When a person tells "Good Morning" to his children, does he do so with feeling, a little more than when he washes his hands? Yes, he does. 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? How much do you act from the deepest place in yourself?

Most people do not access their depth. An inner kind of person is someone who lives with his inner depth all the time. He lives always with the deepest place in himself. We all use the sink many times a day. So too, an inner person uses his deepest place he knows of all the time.

A person usually accesses his depth in extreme situations of either joy or sadness. A person usually

cannot take that depth he reached into his daily life. He remembers the pain he felt from his sadness, but not the depth of his emotions that he reached. The depth that we do recognize, though – how much are we in touch with it on a daily basis...?

Recognition of Ourselves

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.**

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.¹ 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 See the series of *Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus*