



## Fumbling to Find the Light

### Igniting Our Chanukah Vision

All my life I've been a searcher; searching for meaning, searching for truth – looking for light. I was born to be a dreamer. Dreams of light always seem greater than their fulfillment. The weekly Torah reading during Chanukah records the fulfillment of Yosef's dreams. Chanukah and Jewish dreams are inseparable. In order to have a meaningful, spiritual life, we must be dreamers. Without a vision it is difficult to appreciate the light of Chanukah. For Chanukah not only commemorates our past – it is meant to educate us for the future. It gives hope for the fulfillment of all our dreams (Rabbi Berel Wein). I wrote a poem about searching for this light in the recesses of our darkest times, which I share with you at the end of this article. I'm also excited to share with you my thought on a beautiful article by Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi that I learned with my advanced students in preparation for Chanukah. As difficult as it is for me to stop 'doing' and just 'being' this article inspired me to really try to spend ½ an hour in meditation and prayer by the candles every night of Chanukah.

### Rectifying 'Seeing' by Looking at the Chanukah Light

In the '*HaNerot Hallalu*' prayer, that we recite after lighting the Chanukah candles, we mention, "...these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make ordinary use of them, only to look at them alone..." From here we learn that it is a mitzvah to gaze at the Chanukah lights:

שפת אמת ספר בראשית - לחנוכה - שנת [תרל"ב]

(ליל ו) ואין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם רק לראותם כו'. וכן איתא שמצוה לראות נר חנוכה:

We do not have permission to use them only to look at them alone... Thus, it is a mitzvah to look at the Chanukah candle (*Sefat Emet*, on Chanukah, Year 5632).

There is great healing power in gazing at the Chanukah candles. Rav Tzaddok of Lublin explains that looking at the Chanukah lights rectifies any improper 'seeing' which may have occurred throughout the year. For example, if we looked at what belongs to others with jealous eyes, or we lusted after our eyes in other ways. The process of fixing our eyes during Chanukah, leads us to the month of Tevet with which the Hebrew letter ע/ayin – 'the eye' is associated.

ספר עבודת ישראל - לחנוכה

על פי הסתכלות בנר חנוכה לראותם בלבד לתקן כל אחד מה שפגם מעודו בראיית עין:

By means of gazing at the Chanukah candles and "only seeing them," each person can rectify what he blemished through the vision of the eye (*Avodat Yisrael* for Chanukah).

### Our Prayer Facing the Chanukah lights Pierces through the Gate of Heaven

Women have a special connection to Chanukah. The Shulchan Aruch (Chapter 670) brings down the minhag (custom) that women do not engage in work for half an hour after the lighting of the Chanukah lights. The primary melacha that we must refrain from is washing and drying laundry. Also prohibited are weaving, sewing, knitting and needlepoint. It is permissible for women to bake, cook and fry. Washing dishes is also permissible during this time. However, the Chavat Yair requires even more than the essential halacha. "Sit for half an hour facing the Chanukah lights! Look at the flames and relax. Sit! Don't fry sufganiot (doughnuts). Don't change diapers. Don't serve any food. Simply sit!" What do we mostly lack in the world? A settled mind. Hashem said, "Sit and gaze

during this half an hour and see what you have! See all what I sent you. Stop running around thinking that the light exists outside of your home." Stop thinking, "If I only work a little everything will be good." If I only buy another five things, I will have light in my eyes..." No, sit facing what you already have. Your prayers facing the menorah are sent off with express mail to heaven and pierce through the gates! How does that work?

ספר ישעיה פרק ו פסוק ב שְׂרָפִים עֹמְדִים מִמַּעַל לוֹ...

"Serafim (burning angels) stand above iL/lo – Him..." (Yeshay'ahu 6:2).

The word iL/lo which means "Him" has the numerical value of 36, this corresponds to the 36 candles that we light on Chanukah. The Serafim angels stand above our Chanukah lights, eager to perform their mission of carrying our prayers with lightning speed through the gate of heaven. It is permitted to light the Chanukah candles until the last passerby leaves the marketplace (*Shulchan Aruch* 772:2). In Hebrew עַד שֶׁתִּכְלֶה רֶגֶל/Ad shetichleh regel... – 'until the last passerby leaves...' is the acronym for שַׁעַר/sha'ar – 'gate' (Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi).

### Tuning into the Hidden Light

Hashem said, "Let there be light," and there was light" (*Bereishit* 1:3). This light shone for only one and a half days before Hashem hid it for the tzaddikim in the World-to-Come (Rashi, *Bereishit* 1:4). "The Primordial Light served for 36 hours ...and the first Adam was able to see by it from one end of this world to the other" (*Yerushalmi, Berachot* 8:5). Ever since the dimming of that Primordial Light, we yearn for it, search for it and pursue it- in our prayers, studies and meditations. We ask to see Hashem in every aspect of our lives. This Primordial Light of Creation is hidden in the 36 candles of Chanukah (B'nei Yissachar, Kislev). Therefore, even in our darkest hours, we can access this memory, born of the 36 hours when we, humanity as a whole, were bathed in this Light. While staring at the candle flames, since we are glancing at a reflection of the *Ohr Haganuz* (the hidden light of creation) we ask that we be gifted with the ability to see things clearly and see Hashem's compassionate hand in all that occurs.. This light enabled Adam and Chava to see from one end of the world to the other and detect Hashem's presence and Divine energy in everything. So too, today, as we kindle our own lights, we call forth a revelation of this now hidden and intense light (12th century Kabbalist, R. Eliezer of Worms). Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, invites us to turn our senses inward to find, cultivate and rededicate our own inner light. It is a time to empty accumulated garbage, to create an open and receptive space, and to cultivate an intimate relationship with our emotions as the sensory system of our soul. As we gaze at the Chanukah light, we become more and more peaceful inside, one candle at a time. The more supportive and nurturing our inner container, the more the Primordial Light of Creation becomes available to us during this time of year. By gazing into the Chanukah lights we encounter the sparks of this Light which give us the ability to perceive what Hashem is asking of us. We can get clarity on certain issues and suddenly have insight on issues that we are perplexed about. By touching the spark of the Ohr HaGanuz through prayer, while facing the menorah, we will get a mini glance into the 'reflection of Hashem' in the lights of Chanukah. Daven next to these lights and do not miss this opportunity to achieve the ability to better understand things in your life.... (Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi)

### Removing the Dusty Blockages Covering Our Hidden Light

Rav Shlomo explains that each one of us is in possession of a 'holy of holies,' inside the Temple that Hashem asked us to establish for Him in our hearts. However, as we wrestle in life, the dust rises and blurs our vision and we lose sight of our connection with each other. Yet, within the darkness of our lives, the spark of our inner light hides. The Chanukah candles act like a magnet to

draw out this hidden light within each of us. On Chanukah, we have the ability to remove all the dusty blockages that cover our special sparkle and make our light shine. When the Greeks defiled everything, they brought this thick darkness into our lives. It was the miracle of the oil that made it clear once again that we possess something so pure: a light that is so pure, a neshamah that is always pure, a connection with Hashem that cannot be severed. This light will shine through the darkness of our long galut (exile) until until we no longer have clarity of faith. Consequently, we lose sight of our connection to Hashem, an Mashiach comes.

## The Deepest, Gloomy Darkness Makes Us Shine

When we are down and low,  
as if we have lost our glow.  
Everything seems to go wrong  
and there is no more song.

No joy anywhere to find.  
Nobody helpful and kind,  
as if no-one ever cared.  
We feel lonely and scared.

My people have gone astray.  
There is nothing I can say.  
Bombs are thrown every day.  
Oh G-d how I want to pray.

Everything is so dark and cold,  
seems to be so out of control.  
I can't get anything right.  
Fumbling to find the light.

There is no other way and course.  
I must turn to my inner resource.  
What can I hold on to?  
Hashem where are you?

Who am I and what am I here for?  
I need to dig deep and get to the core.  
Where is the spirit emanating from You?  
My holy neshamah so pure and so true.

Just like a caterpillar spins her cocoon,  
we will be colorful butterflies soon.  
As they bring forth their evil schemes,  
we emerge from the darkness of dreams.

Without the wicked Kingdom of Greece,  
we would have had no model for Peace.  
How to stand up for our belief and fight,  
to search for truth until finding the light.

The deepest, gloomy darkness makes us shine.  
Like grapes trampled we have become wine.  
There is reward for our extensive toil.  
Like olives pressed we become pure oil.

When we are down and low,  
That's when we can learn to glow.  
When everything seems to go wrong,  
that's when we must sing a new song.