



Zot Chanukah

The final day of Chanukah is commonly referred to as “Zot Chanukah.” The name is derived from the Torah reading of that day, “Zot chanukat hamizbeach beyom himashach oto mei-eit nesi’ei Yisrael — This was the dedication offering of the altar presented by the chieftains on the day it was anointed.” (*Bamidbar* 7:84) We read about the offerings of the last five princes, as well as the summation of the *korbanot*, beginning and ending with the words, “Zot chanukat hamizbeach — this was the dedication offering of the altar.” As

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the holiday itself was given the name “Chanukah,” this last day, with its special name, must hold deeper significance.

The Chatam Sofer *zt”l* offers a novel explanation for the events that transpired during the original eight days of Chanukah. He posits that when the Jews lit the Menorah after the war with the Greeks, a fire descended from heaven to kindle its lights. Since it was heavenly fire, it did not burn out, miraculously staying ablaze for seven days. On the eighth day, Hashem made an even greater miracle, and the heavenly fire ignited the oil, allowing it to burn in a natural fashion. In so doing, Hashem expressed how dearly He valued the Jews’ efforts to produce the purest oil for the Menorah, as such, Hashem caused the supernatural fire to function in a “natural” way. Notes Rav Gedalya Schorr *zt”l*, how precious our efforts to do mitzvot are! How beloved are we to Hashem!

In *Halekach Vehalebuv* on Chanukah, Rav Avraham Schorr explains that the original Mishkan in the desert was completed on the 25th day of Kislev but was only inaugurated on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Chazal describe the day of inauguration in the most awesome terms, likening it to the day the heaven and earth were created; it was a day on which the world reached its *tikun*, its perfected state. Yet, prior to the day of inauguration, Moshe held a seven-day initiation period. Thus, in theory, if the Mishkan had been inaugurated immediately upon its completion, the eighth day of Chanukah would have fallen out on

Rosh Chodesh, the day of the Mishkan's actual inauguration. Therefore, *Zot Chanukah* potentially holds tremendous energy for each person to access the necessary levels to facilitate his own personal *tikun* in his life.

The Ba'al Shem Tov Hakadosh *zt"l*, based on the teachings of the *Arizal*, reveals that if one is on a low spiritual level, his final judgement for the year is extended beyond Yom Kippur, beyond Shemini Atzeret, until *Zot Chanukah*. Rav Eliezer Meizlish in *Sichot B'avodat Hashem* teaches that some people are born after seven months, others are born after nine months. Tzadikim are "born" seven months from Nissan, the start of the year, and can therefore be judged in Tishrei. In contrast, the general masses need nine full months to develop and do teshuvah properly, hence, their judgement is extended until Chanukah. Further, he expounds that one can either be woken in the morning with an alarm clock, or by turning on the light. Those who were not awakened by the call of the shofar, can still wake up from the light that shines into the room; this is the light of the Chanukah menorah.

Rav Wolfson *zt"l* in *Festivals of Faith* explains that the intense power of lighting the menorah for eight days ignites the spiritual fire within one's neshamah and has the power to expedite one's teshuvah. Rav Yisrael of Ruzhin *zt"l* teaches that even a simple person can achieve great effects through his tefillot on *Zot Chanukah*, similar to what a tzaddik can achieve on Rosh Hashanah. It is through the power of having lit the 36 candles that we access the "*lamed vav*" aspect of *tzidkut* inside ourselves, bringing us to greater heights and greater closeness to the holiness of our true selves. ■

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