



SHARE

CHANUKA

The Language of Light



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The Language of Light

Imagine: a person is stranded on an island. They are alone and have no need for language. But they keep reading, speaking and honing their vocabulary. Why? Because they anticipate the day when they will be with people. When their words can once again be the foundation of meaningful relationships.¹

In a similar way, there is a mystical language that describes the essence of the world. It always existed, and it continues to be studied, even though its applicability was not readily apparent. As we move toward better times, however, its relevance becomes more and more apparent.²

And so, this Chanuka, I want to try something a little different: to share glimpses of the “Language of Light” for the “Festival of Lights,” through the Sefirot.

The Sefirot themselves represent a truth beyond comprehension. They are compared to vessels, garments, or lenses, but for our purposes, we will focus on them as Divine attributes that also serve as mediums for a relationship. While some of the words and concepts may be less familiar to some, I invite you to explore them with me.

Understanding the Sefirot requires a shift in the way we view the world. In general, we see only the surface of existence, unaware of the depth beneath. But sometimes, the surface leaves us unsatisfied, and we feel drawn to look deeper. By breaking through that surface, we uncover layer upon layer—each revealing itself only after the previous one has been shattered.

This path inward mirrors the essence of Chanuka itself. Chanuka is about revealing the light, but revelation doesn’t necessarily mean creating a new light; rather, it can be about uncovering an inner light that has always been there. As we embark on our journey, we will follow the process of the Sefirot as they express themselves each night.

The Infinite, by its very nature, is beyond the grasp of finite beings. The Sefirot contain infinity and finitude and refract the light of the Infinite into something we can perceive. By exploring these Divine attributes, we awaken our own emotional frameworks through which we experience our lives.

¹ This metaphor is adapted from the introduction to the *Tzlach*, R. Yechezkel Landau’s commentary on the Talmud.

² See, for example, *Leshem Shevo VeAchlama, Sefer HaBiurim*, p. 38; *Leshem Sefer HaDe’a*, p. 157.

INTRODUCTION

This is not simple. So here I offer one access point, through five short prompts each day, namely:

1. **Introducing:** Sharing an idea that orients us to the essence of the Sefira we will be focusing on.
2. **Exploring a Core Text:** Exploring a kernel of a key passage from R. Meir from Korostyshiv, author of *Me'ir Einei Chachamim*, one of the classical mystical works on Chanuka.³
3. **Digging Deeper:** Unpacking the specific Sefira of the night, supported by further sources to deepen our understanding.
4. **Points to Ponder:** Offering a practical reflection, helping us integrate these ideas into our own lives.
5. **Visualize the Message:** Providing a 1-minute video, accessible via QR code and hyperlink, which will bring the day's message to life in a visual and engaging way.

At the end of this guide, you will find the blessings one recites when lighting the candles, along with some intentions to consider as you light.

Thank you, God. I am grateful to live these ideas together with the amazing Share Team, whose purpose is to help bring them to life for more people. Thank you to Rabbis Jeremy Tibbetts and Joey Rosenfeld for being study partners in developing these thoughts and ideas; Ari Levisohn and Aliza Crook for their careful edits, Yoel Bender for his beautiful design and Elisha Zakai and Gemma Denby for the masterful videos.

Join me as we connect with eight lights over the eight nights and tap into the splendor that can illuminate the world.

Points to Ponder

Consider how you will light the candles differently this year. What will you be sensitive to? What are the surfaces you need to break to go a little deeper?



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³ This work was inspired by a powerful moment: When R. Meir watched his teacher, R. Zev Wolf of Zhitomer, lighting the Chanuka candles. It is no coincidence that R. Zev Wolf's own book was called *Ohr HaMe'ir*, "The Illuminating Light," as a sense of this light and experience permeates the writings. Just as R. Meir was inspired by witnessing his teacher, I, too, hope we can find inspiration in learning his work and observing the lighting around us, uncovering the depths within the simple act of lighting a candle. When translating this text, for brevity, I have included slight elucidations to explain more clearly, but I encourage you to study the full work.

1. Bina — the first light

There is something remarkable about the seven colors of the rainbow, shining forth in all their grandeur. And yet what I find even more remarkable, is the realization that all of this diversity comes from unity. A single, simple white light refracts through a prism and produces a range of colors.

The Sefira of Bina is the wisdom of discernment. Bina represents the powerful idea that multiplicity emerges from within unity itself.¹ On the first night of Chanuka we light just one candle, representing the simplicity of singularity. Even as we add another candle each night, we should not lose sight of the Source from which all light originates (the same Source where all difference originates as well). When we encounter dissonance, remember that at the core, the one thing we all have in common, is that we are different.



וודאי בהתגלות הנס הזה יש כח באדם לחדש כל מידותיו
ומעשיו הכל בהארת בינה שהוא סוד פך אחד של שמן ...
שע"י עבודת ישראל יעלו אותם למקור שורש.

Certainly, the revelation of this miracle [of Chanuka], contains the strength within a person to renew all of their character traits and action through the light of [the Sefira of] Bina, which is the secret of the single jar of oil... for through the Jewish people's service, they raise [their character traits and actions] to the source of the root [which is the Sefira of Bina].²

Digging Deeper

We are taught to seek unity, yet we live in a world of overwhelming diversity. How can all of the multiplicity we see emerge from a singular Source? This is where the Sefira of Bina comes in.

Bina is the ability to take a single idea and develop the many details it contains, much like a seed that grows into a tree with countless branches. It allows us to see the connections between things that appear separate.

¹ Zohar, Vayechi, 151a.

² R. Meir from Korostyshiv, Me'ir Einei Chachamim 13:4.

Think of parents in a family. The children may look and act differently, each with their own unique traits, but they all come from the same origin. Bina gives us the perspective to recognize that beneath the differences on the surface lies a shared root. It helps us hear the unified song that emerges from what might otherwise seem like dissonant chords of difference.³

The Talmud teaches that fifty gates of Bina were created.⁴ The number fifty corresponds to the Hebrew word *mi*, meaning “who,” highlighting our desire to not only seek out a common root for all differences, but to seek out the ultimate Who that made diversity possible.⁵

The light of Chanuka shines forth from within the space of Bina. As R. Kook explains, each candle represents a different shade of experience.⁶ But within the multiplicity of expression, the deep sense of unity often disappears. That’s why, when we make the blessing over the candles, we use the singular word *ner* (נר), meaning “candle,” even though we are lighting multiple flames. The blessing reminds us that all the individual lights ultimately reveal the greatness of the whole.

Points to Ponder

As you sit by the first candle, contemplate the secret of unity, the process in which the one and the many are unified. What feels disparate in your life? How can you see the commonality between the differences as part of your broader existence, and unite them?



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3 R. Yechiel Michel Epstein develops this idea in his introduction to the Choshen Mishpat section of his *Aruch HaShulchan*.

4 *Rosh HaShana* 21b.

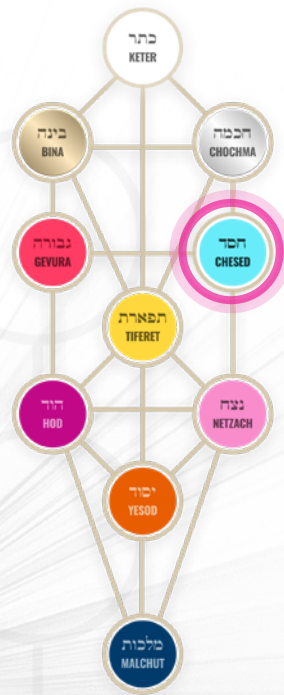
5 R. Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim* 23:3.

6 R. Abraham Isaac HaKohen, *Olot Ra'ayah*, Vol. 2, Chanuka, s.v. 'ner.'

2. Chesed — the second light

Eleven months after his liberation from the Nazi concentration camps, Viktor E. Frankl gave a series of public lectures in Vienna, to survivors who had endured unimaginable suffering. These lectures were later published under a title that captures the essence of his message: "Saying Yes to Life, In Spite of Everything."

This is an example of Chesed, the Sefira of the second night. Chesed symbolizes boundless loving-kindness and positivity, among other traits. Chesed is not tested when life is easy; its strength is revealed when times are tough. Affirming goodness in difficult moments is one key way to help Chesed manifest in the world. This positivity bias reflects the belief that a constructive outlook helps us recognize opportunities, even in challenging times. The belief in Chesed actually helps reveal Chesed itself.



ובעשות להם השי"ת איזה נס וחסד בעוה"ז משיגים מזה טוב הגנוז, שמוכח מזה שאנחנו חלק הי' עמו וכוונתו ית' בזה כדי שישראל ישיגו זאת ויתעלו כמעשיהם בכל פעם ופעם להתקרבות השי"ת יותר ויותר.

When God does for them [the Jewish people] a miracle or [acts through the Sefira of] Chesed in this world, we grasp the hidden goodness through this, as it demonstrates that we are a part of God. God's blessed intention with this is that the Jewish nation should grasp this and raise up their actions each time, to come closer and closer to God.¹

1 Me'ir Einei Chachamim 11:1.

Digging Deeper:

When the world feels dark and cold, the response is not to deny the darkness but to add more light. Each additional candle on the Chanukia represents the Divine force of Chesed, which constantly drives the world forward.² Chesed is the flow of goodness that irrigates our souls, often hidden beneath the surface but always present. Our acts of loving-kindness tap into and reveal the ever-present Divine Chesed. It is our task to affirm the light and say yes to the world, which is built upon Chesed.³

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that the light concealed at the outset of creation is the light of Chesed, the ultimate goodness that shines forth from within. While it is typically concealed, the Chanuka candles give us a momentary taste of the ultimate hidden goodness to be revealed in the future.

Points to Ponder

With the addition of a new light, we encounter the promise of growth, of movement upwards. The soft shine of the candle can awaken our minds to the light that rests beneath, hidden yet present in the silence of its revelation. Where else can you uncover the light?



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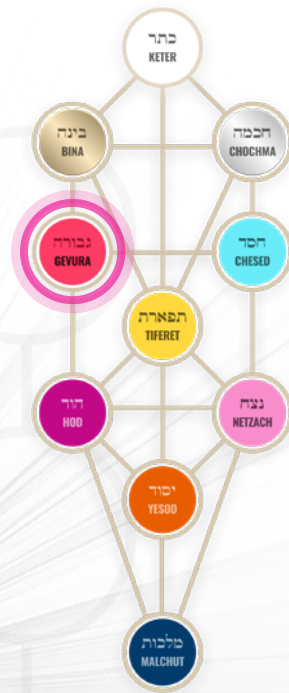
² Based on the words of the Arizal in Eitz Chaim: Shaar HaKlalim, Klal Alef. See Kalach Pitchei Chochma from the Ramchal, Petach 1-4.

³ Psalms 89:3.

3. *Gevura* — the third light

The grandeur of the sea in its expansive flow of life and possibility reflects the Sefira of Chesed which we explored last night. But without the shore to hold it back, the water would overwhelm us.¹ This holding back is the essence of *Gevura*. At first glance, Chesed and *Gevura* may seem incompatible—where Chesed asks us to say yes to life, *Gevura* demands the ability to say no. But in truth, these ideas complete each other through their tension, forming a necessary balance. Without the shore, there would be no ocean, and without the ocean, life couldn't exist.

On the third night, don't just see the candles—notice the space between them. Make space in your life, and the next time you need to say no, consider what you are saying yes to.



וכעת שאנחנו עומדים להדליק נר חנוכה, בעזרנו הנס
שנעשה ע"י מתתיהו כה"ג שמדת עבודתו להעלות ולקשור
דברים המותרים ביחודו ית'... עד ביאת מלך המשיח במהרה
בימינו כמ"ש לעיל, מצותה בהדלקת נר חנוכה להניחה
בטפה, שהם חסדים וגבורות.

When God does for them [the Jewish people] a miracle or [acts through the Sefira of] Chesed in this world, we grasp the hidden goodness through this, as it demonstrates that we are a part of God. God's blessed intention with this is that the Jewish nation should grasp this and raise up their actions each time, to come closer and closer to God.²

¹ Based on the comments of R. Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, the Vilna Gaon in his commentary to *Safra D'Tzniyuta* p. 3b; see as well the comments of R. Moshe Cordevaro in his *Tomer Devorah, Gevurah*.

² *Me'ir Einei Chachamim* 16:1.

Digging Deeper:

Some levels of Divine light are so intense, transcendent, and infinite that they overwhelm our limited perception and appear as darkness. This darkness is not a deficiency but the mark of a light so lofty that it cannot be grasped. And so, the Sefira of Gevura reveals a profound truth: not all darkness is a lack of light.

This idea finds powerful expression in the teachings of Kabbalah. One of its greatest medieval sages, Rabbi Yitzchak Sagi Nahor, bore a name that means 'Isaac of Too Much Light,' despite being blind. His name reflects a profound paradox: An overwhelming brilliance of Divine light can appear as concealment, even to the point of blindness.

Rabbi Dov Ber Schneuri explains that on Chanuka, we are not only celebrating the emergence of light but also the illuminated darkness that gives birth to it. Just as a blinding light can seem dark to the eye, there are moments in life when hidden goodness appears as darkness, only waiting to be revealed.³

Points to Ponder

When gazing at the flame of Gevura, notice that the light is framed by the shining darkness that surrounds it, giving it shape. Let your eyes focus on the wick itself, the measured vessel that enables the light to shine. We live in a world of concealment, and our job is to make it shine like the brilliance of the sun.



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³ Based on R. Dov Ber Schneuri, *the Mittler Rebbe of Chabad's Shaarei Orach: Discourses on Chanuka and Purim*, Discourse 1 and 2, pp. 14-26.

4. Tiferet — the fourth light

There is something universally captivating about symmetry—a beauty that draws us in and holds the world together. This sense of harmony reflects the Sefira of Tiferet, which sits at the center of all the Sefirot. God created the world with stability and equilibriums, ensuring that all forces are in perfect balance.

If you think of the Sefirot as mapped onto a body, then Tiferet is located in the torso. It is where the blood gets pumped from, the lungs breathe, and the digestive system produces energy. At the center, Tiferet creates equilibrium, giving each of the Sefirot what they need. As we look at the four candles, we don't always notice the four branches without candles. But they balance each other out. And this is what we need in our own lives.

It's easy to focus on the four lit candles, but try to focus on the unlit ones as well, balancing out the other side.



והכוונה להשלים ראשית מחשבתו ית' הנמשך דרך
תפארת... שכל העולמות והנבראים הם פארות וענפים
מהאדם.

And the intention to complete the initial thought [of God] blessed be He, is drawn down from the [Sefira of] Tiferet...where all the worlds that were created stem from and adorn an individual [at the balanced center].¹

¹ Me'ir Einei Chachamim 2:1.

Digging Deeper

When we explore the concept of balance deeply, we encounter the profound distinction between contradiction and paradox. A contradiction insists that opposites are constantly fighting to cancel each other out, forcing a resolution where one must prevail. A paradox, however, reveals the beauty of opposites existing in harmony. We may not be able to grasp both opposites at the same time, but Tiferet reminds us that both are sustaining each other. Tiferet is not a problem to solve but a mystery to hold.

As the Vilna Gaon explains, the balance of the scale rests at the center of existence.² Tiferet resides at that center, revealing the unity within duality. It is not about choosing between Chesed or Gevura, nor about blending them into a single compromise. Instead, Tiferet shows that their tension is itself a form of divine beauty—a reflection of the paradoxical nature of being.

Points to Ponder

When reflecting on our lives, do we find balance, or do we find a perpetual sense of disorder? Focusing on the symmetry of a still flame, encountering what feels like paradox, we uncover the secret of opposites coexisting.



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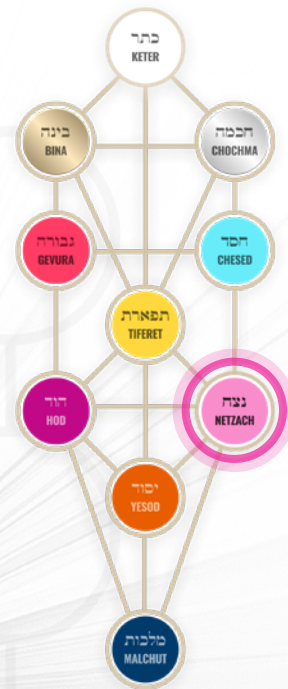
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2 R. Elijah ben Solomon Zalman on *Safra D'Tziniyuta* p. 1b.

5. Netzach — the fifth light

You know the feeling: You've had a late night, it's freezing outside, and the last thing you want to do is get out of bed. That everyday struggle—the effort of pushing forward despite challenges—lies at the heart of the Sefira of Netzach. On a grander scale, we see this during Chanuka. The Greeks tried to impose their culture on the Jewish people, taking away their freedoms. Yet the Jews remained determined to fight back, to stand by their beliefs, and to keep pushing through adversity. That dogged refusal to give up, even when things are hard, is Netzach in action.

We often tell children that it's not about winning or losing; it's about giving your best. In Hebrew, the word for "to win" (*natzeach*) comes from the same root as Netzach, teaching that simply putting in your full effort is its own kind of victory. No matter the outcome, the very act of trying—of struggling for something worthwhile—has a purpose. "According to the effort is the reward,"¹ and if you've truly done your best, you've already won in the most important way.



שהמעשה היא בלתי תענוג רק בהכרח וכפייה... זה בחינת
נצח... אינו נפגם, כי יכול לנצח מידותיו בכפייה והכרח.

When the action is without pleasure [and not comfortable], only through force and overcoming [one's desires does one embody]...the aspect of Netzach... [This Sefira] hasn't been diminished, because one can master their character traits through force and overcoming [which is the essence of Netzach].²

1 Avot 5:22.

2 Me'ir Einei Chachamim 5:1.

Digging Deeper

The fifth candle marks a pivotal moment: The number of lit candles now surpasses the empty spaces on the Chanukia. The candlelight not only dispels the darkness but also transforms it, creating room for even more light to shine. This transformation embodies the essence of the fifth night and the Sefira of Netzach.

Celebrating our victory over the Greeks, Chanukah's light is intrinsically connected to Netzach. When darkness feels overpowering, it's easy to want to give up. However, this is precisely when something extraordinary can occur: Choosing to do the right thing simply because it is right, not for personal comfort or rewards. This inner strength turns darkness into light and reveals that our struggles were not in vain but were instead a hidden journey toward greatness. Fighting against the darkness means more than just standing up for what is right—it demonstrates to the world that, despite obstacles, we have the power to create light.

Points to Ponder

What are the areas where you feel in the dark? How can you push back those feelings and accomplish something amazing? What are the behaviors, attributes, or situations you have to fight against to emerge victorious?



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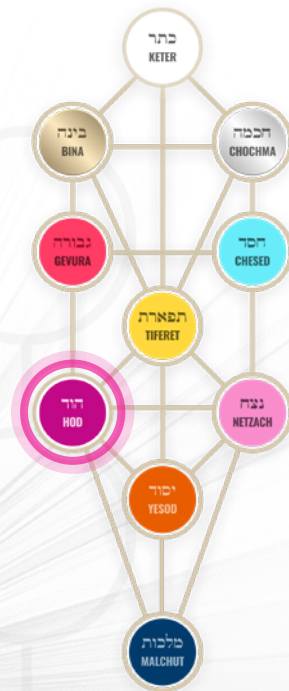
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6. Hod — the sixth light

Tonight, we focus on the Sefira of Hod: not just embracing the struggle, but actually winning. The challenge of Hod lies in how we respond to success. For nothing sours a victory more than arrogance, the sense that we achieved everything by our own prowess.¹ It goes to our heads, turning grace into ego.

There are always those who support us, and there is always a Divine Hand guiding us. Hod reflects *Hoda'a* — a gratitude born of dependence and humility. True success means recognizing the forces, seen and unseen, that brought us to this point. Without acknowledging Who helped us get here, we lose the greater game.

The historic victory of Chanuka was the triumph of the few over the many. But the mitzvah is not to gloat; it is *L'hodot Ul'hallel*—to express gratitude and praise. Acknowledging the role of others in our success doesn't diminish us. On the contrary, it elevates us, transforming us into more successful and complete people.



כשישראל בעצמם משיגים השגה נפלאה זו – שישראל הם חלק ה' עמו מתחילת בריאת העולם... ובהשלמת ההודאה זו בישראל אז נתקן ההוד ג"כ מלמעלה, שיתפשט אור הבהיר על כל הנבראים מעלה ומטה שיהיה נשלם מידת הוד מכל פגיוותיו.

When the Jewish people perceive this wonderful realization - that the Jewish people are part of God, since the beginning of creation... And with this complete admission [and gratitude] within the Jewish people, the [Sefira of] Hod is fixed up from above, [and] the clear light descends on all of that which was created from above to below, thus, Hod is made complete without blemish.²

¹ Deuteronomy 8:17.

² We will only touch on this idea here. See *Me'ir Einei Chachamim* 5:1 for the full idea.

Digging Deeper

The energy of Chanuka didn't begin in the Temple.³ Its roots stretch back to the moment when Jacob wrestled with an angel deep into the night.⁴ At dawn, after his adversary realized Jacob could not be defeated and, as a last resort, he struck his hip, Jacob demanded a blessing and received the name Israel. This name did more than mark a personal transformation; it established the spiritual foundation of the nation of Israel itself. This moment reveals the deeper prototype of Chanuka and the inner meaning of Hod.

Mapped onto the human body, Hod corresponds to the left leg, and it was precisely there that Jacob was struck. In this prophetic moment, the name Israel emerged, hinting at an eternal struggle: The Jewish people, as descendants of Israel, would be challenged with Hod. Gratitude does not come easily. It requires conscious effort.

In this light, Chanuka becomes eight days of *Hoda'ah*⁵—a celebration of gratitude. During these days we pause, reflect, and acknowledge the miraculous amidst the mundane. Chanuka reminds us that success is not just about victory but about recognizing the Divine presence and the support of others that make our triumphs possible. In this acknowledgment, we elevate the moment and ourselves, transforming fleeting victories into enduring spiritual growth.

Points to Ponder

Where do you draw strength from? Where can you integrate gratitude more deeply into your life? When you accept your own limitations, you come to the secret of surrender. Surrender opens up the possibility of equanimity and joy, the joyful acceptance of our powerlessness. It is there that our true power is revealed.



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³ *Tikunei Zohar, 28b-29a.*

⁴ *Genesis 32:25.*

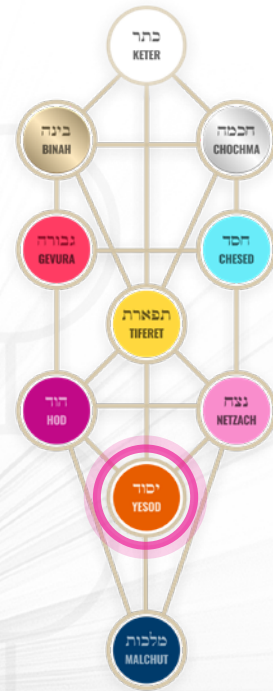
⁵ *Al Hanisim prayer, recited throughout the festival of Chanuka.*

7. *Yesod* — the seventh light

Too much of a good thing is not good. Dousing a flame in oil actually extinguishes it. But when the oil is drawn gradually through the wick, absorbed bit by bit, the flame burns steadily and brightly.

Chanuka introduces us to a wealth of profound ideas and inspiration. Yet, as we approach the conclusion of this celebration and prepare to return to the rhythm of winter, the question arises: How do we transform these ideas from fleeting sparks of inspiration into a steady, practical source of continued growth?

This is an element of the Sefira of Yesod, the strength to hold back and move slowly, step by step. We don't wait for the final night to begin this work. We start now, on the seventh night, while we can still plan and act with intention, ensuring that inspiration becomes sustainable growth.



צדיק יסוד עולם... שעל ידו נשפע כל טוב... והשכינה
כביכול מקבלת השפעתה ממדת היסוד בסוד צדיק כתיש
כתישין לאפקא משחא מעליא... עד שיתקשר כל גופו בגודל
התקשרות כל החושים ואברים.

A righteous person is the foundation of the world... for through the righteous person, all good emerges... And the Divine presence, as it were, received its influence from the characteristic of Yesod, through the secret of the righteous one, crushing the olives, to extract oil from them...until one's entire body is connected in great connective delight, all the senses and limbs.¹

1 Me'ir Einei Chachamim 15:1.

Digging Deeper

Oil plays a central role in the miracle of Chanuka, where a single jar of sealed olive oil was found. One of the defining features of oil is that no matter what it touches, it always leaves a mark.² This is the way of holiness. When one has a true sacred encounter, it leaves a permanent impression. A righteous person, embodying Yesod, must leave an impact on the world around him. To hold back from influencing others is to neglect one's purpose. Just as extracting oil requires effort and persistence, fulfilling one's potential demands hard work. Only through this process can the oil—and the person—release their full, transformative power.

Points to Ponder

What areas of your life do you need to squeeze to extract your essence? Step by step, have the patience to bring out your deepest potential.



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² R. Pinchas of Koritz, *Imrei Pinchas Chanuka* #61.

8. *Malchut* — the eighth light

The nature of the candle is that no matter which way you hold it, its flame always reaches upward. This is what these last eight days have been about. While tomorrow marks the end of lighting candles, the lessons and light that we created continue to illuminate our lives.

The Sefira of Malchut is the culmination of everything we've worked towards. It's the moment we step back, take in the entire process, and see the full picture—our potential brought to life. Tonight, we move beyond reflection and allow Malchut to inspire us into action.



שירום תשוקתו למעלה בשלימות כל המידות, בהתעלות
מדת המלכות למעלה למעלה בשלימות כל המידות, לעשות
כל מעשינו בדביקות השיית בתענוג.

One should direct their desires upwards when they have [finished working on and made] their attributes complete, [so that then they can] raise up the attribute of Malchut higher and higher with all the attributes full, to perform all actions with joyous cleaving to God.¹

1 Me'ir Einei Chachamim 5:3.

Digging Deeper

On this final night of Chanuka, all eight candles burn bright. From the first day, we knew this moment would come. But only now, when we step back and see the full glow of all the light together, can we appreciate the Sefira of Malchut. Malchut has no substance of its own, only a new perspective on what already exists.¹ Each tree is a tree and remains a tree. It is only when we step back that we can see these individual parts make up a new whole when situated together. Yet this perspective contains a radical novelty: the ability to move from one way of seeing to another.

We see a leaf on a branch of a tree and forget about the grand forest of which it is a part. We get so obsessed with a certain encounter, in the here and now, that we miss out on where we could and should be going on the journey that is life. Through the Sefira of Malchut, we gain the capacity to rise, to ascend above the noise and see the bigger picture of which we all play our part in completing.

Points to Ponder

After honing in on different areas of focus each night, how does this all come together? How can you step back and appreciate the bigger picture of life and the role you play within it?



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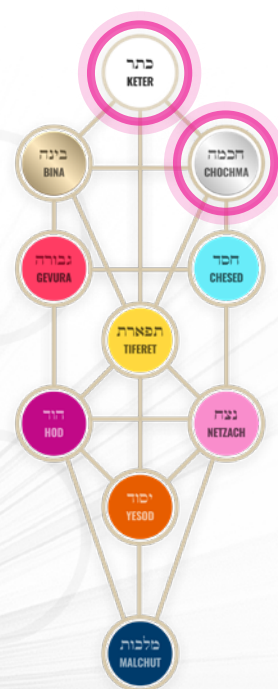
¹ Zohar, Chayei Sara, 125a.m

Conclusion — Chochma and Keter

Eternal Light

You are stumbling through a dark forest when, all of a sudden, a flash of lightning illuminates the entire path in front of you and everything around it. Then, after the blink of an eye, darkness returns.¹ Chanuka, in the middle of the darkest time of the year, is that flash of inspiration. The Zohar often introduces passages with the term *Ta Chazi* (“come and see”). Now that we have seen, the work is to hold onto this vision in our minds, to guide us as the darkness returns.

Chanuka is a taste of the future, a drop of eternity dripping into the flow of time. When we catch a glimpse of that which awaits behind the curtain of concealment, we are changed forever. Even as the light departs, it never disappears. The secret of these spiritual lights is that, just like the oil of Chanuka, they exceed their own limitations. They burn brighter and longer than should be possible. Even when the revealed light of the candle burns out, the light of the soul is just beginning to shine.²



The Last Two Sefirot

No journey is ever truly complete—not even the journey of Chanuka. Over eight nights, we connected to eight Sefirot, yet two remained unspoken: Chochma and Keter.

Chochma is associated with “nothingness,” but not in the way we typically understand it. It is not nothing, but No-thing—a reflection of God’s transcendent Being, beyond the grasp of our finite existence.

Keter represents our deepest will and desire, beyond all other levels. It is where the connection to God is so profound that even the ideas of unity and separation no longer matter. Keter is beyond everything. Chanuka reveals light from within darkness, teaching us to transform the darkness itself into light, yet the journey of Chanuka is defined by balance—between light and darkness, revelation and concealment.

¹ Maimonides employs this analogy with regard to prophecy, in his introduction to the *Guide to the Perplexed*.

² Proverbs 20:27.

CONCLUSION

The highest Sefirot, Keter and Chochma, could not be revealed because their light is so intense and all-encompassing that it leaves no room for hiddenness.³ Keter, the loftiest Sefira, expresses the ultimate desire for sublime pleasure at the heart of all spiritual experience, a reality so unified and pure that it transcends all complexity. Similarly, Chochma reflects Divine Oneness through the nullification of the ego, revealing a connection so absolute that it eliminates the possibility of concealment.

To preserve the delicate balance of revelation and hiddenness that defines the Chanuka journey, these sublime lights must remain concealed—hidden—in the depths of existence, unseen yet ever-present, sustaining the harmony that makes the Chanuka experience possible.

The absence of Keter and Chochma in the Chanuka process is not a bug within the model, it is a feature, for it is specifically from within the possibility of separation and the intimations of darkness that we come to discover the powerful lights of illuminated unity.

Tap into the hidden lights in your life that reveal ultimate connection and purpose. They may not need a candle to represent them, but their effervescence is ever present. Let it shine!

Points to Ponder

What is your true will in life? What do you believe God wills for you? How can you align these more?



VISUALIZE THE MESSAGE

[Watch](#) the captivating video version of this series and share it with someone that may appreciate it!

³ In truth, the light of Chochma and Keter is revealed, but only once it is channeled and transformed through Bina into a reality we can experience.

Intentions to kindle within ourselves as we kindle the lights

The Jewish spiritual masters over the generations have developed a variety of intentions and meditations around the lighting of the Chanuka candles. The following encapsulates some of these, at each key stage in preparations. I am indebted to Binyamin Casper who shared the basis for the following, based on a summary of the teachings of R. Yitzchak Meir Morgenstern, captured in the book *B'yam Darkecha*.

REVELATION:

Placing the Menorah

Receipt of the intense light that descends from the highest places and flows downward towards us below.

Give me strength and the proper frame of mind to keenly recognize, properly value, and openly receive the immense light contained within the candles of Chanuka and all that they represent.

NULLIFICATION:

Pouring the Oil

Oil symbolizes Torah knowledge and close familiarity with God.

“God has chosen to anoint you with oil of gladness over your friends.”

— Psalms 45:8

Give me understanding to truly believe that God controls all and is glorified by our service.

Give me Torah knowledge that provides an understanding of God’s ways and inspires a desire to be close to Him that’s sparked by joy and the delight of my heart.

LONGING:

Placing the Wick

Requesting closeness to God in a way of modesty, humility, and submissiveness.

“My soul thirsts for God, the living God.”

— Psalms 42:3

I have the desire and longing to draw nearer to God and to feel the light of the Shechinah in my life; this desire is communicated in Psalms: “Illuminate Your face to Your servants!”

— Psalms 119:135

Just as the wick assists the fire to draw up oil, so too, I will try to draw closer to God.

UNIFICATION:

Lighting the Flame

We light the flame within our souls, craving to leave darkness and merit an existence that’s full of vitality and emotion; true lives of faith and revelations of God’s light.

We hope to spend our lives residing in “the light [that shines] of the face of the living King.”

— Mishlei 16:15

Give me the feeling and the gift of clear, strong faith that “there is nothing / none other than God;” I fully acknowledge that nothing exists in this world besides God. All my strength and abilities, and anything that happens to me are directly sent to me from the Creator of the world.

BLESSINGS

Following the lighting of the Shamash, which serves as a candle to light the other candles, one lights the rightmost candle and each night, one adds an additional candle to the left of that. Each night, one lights the new candle first, moving toward the right, and a number of blessings and hymns are recited as below.¹

Before lighting, one states the following blessings:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to light the Chanuka candles.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who made miracles for our ancestors in those days, at this time.

On the first night one adds the following blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהִחַיֵּנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ
לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this time.

¹ The following is based on the standard text in Sefaria. The first hymn following the blessings (Hanerot Halelu) evolved from the tractate Sofrim; and the final song (Maoz Tzur) was a piece composed in Germany in the thirteenth century, likely by someone by the name of Mordechai (based on the paragraphs being an acrostic for this name). The translations are adapted from Sefaria and the Koren Shalem Siddur.

After lighting the first candle, it is customary to sing the following:

הַנְּרוֹת הַלְלוּ שְׁאֲנוּ מִדְּלִיקָיִן, עַל הַנְּסִים וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת
וְעַל הַמִּלְחָמוֹת, שְׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה, עַל יְדֵי כַּהֲנִיךָ
הַקְּדוֹשִׁים. וְכָל שְׁמוֹנֵת יָמֵי הַחֲנֻכָּה הַנְּרוֹת הַלְלוּ קֹדֶשׁ הֵם וְאִין לָנוּ רְשׁוֹת
לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם, אֲלֵא לְרֵאוֹתָם בְּלֶכֶד, כִּי לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל
עַל נְסִיךָ וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ.

We kindle these lights on account of the miracles and wonders, deliverances and victories, You performed for our ancestors in those days, at this time, through Your holy priests. During all the eight days of Chanuka these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make any other use of them, other than to look at them, in order that we may give thanks and praise Your name for Your miracles, Your wonders, and Your deliverances.

When the lighting is complete, it is customary to sing the following:

Refuge, Rock of my salvation: to You it is a delight to give praise.

Restore my House of prayer, so that there I may offer You thanksgiving.

When You silence the loud-mouthed foe,

then will I complete, with song and psalm, the altar's dedication.

מַעֲזוֹ צוּר יְשׁוּעָתִי לָךְ נֶאֱחָ לְשַׁבַּח.

תִּכְוֵן בֵּית תַּפְלְתִּי וְשֵׁם תוֹדָה נִזְבַּח.

לְעַת תִּכְיֹן מִטְבַּח מִצַּר הַמִּנְבַּח.

אֲז אֲגַמֹּר בְּשִׁיר מְזֻמֹּר חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.

Troubles sated my soul; my strength was spent with sorrow.

They embittered my life with hardship, when I was enslaved under Egyptian rule.

But God with His great power brought out His treasured people,

while Pharaoh's host and followers sank like a stone in the deep.

רַעוֹת שָׂבַע נַפְשִׁי בְּיָגוֹן כַּחֵי כְּלָה.

חַיֵּי מָרָו בְּקוֹשֵׁי בְשַׁעְבוֹד מַלְכוּת עֲגָלָה.

וּבִיָּדוֹ הַגָּדוֹלָה הוֹצִיא אֶת הַסְּגָלָה.

חֵיל פָּרַעַה וְכָל יָרְעוֹ יָרְדוּ כְּאֶבֶן בַּמַּצְוֵלָה.

He brought me to His holy abode, but even there I found no rest.

The oppressor came and exiled me, because I had served strange gods.

I had drunk poisoned wine. I almost perished.

Then Babylon fell, Zerubbabel came: with seventy years I was saved.

דְּבִיר קֹדֶשׁוֹ הִכְיֵאֲנִי וְגַם שָׁם לֹא שָׁקַטְתִּי.

וּכְבָּא נוֹגֵשׁ וְהִגְלִינִי כִּי זָרִים עֲבַדְתִּי.

וַיִּזוּ רַעַל מִסְכָּתִי כַּמַּעַט שְׁעִבְרַתִּי.

קֵץ כָּבֵל וְזַבְכָּל לְקֵץ שְׁבַעִים נוֹשְׁעָתִי.

The Agagite, son of Hammedatha, sought to cut down the tall fir tree,

But it became a trap to him, and his arrogance was brought to an end.

You raised the head of the Benjaminite, and the enemy's name You blotted out.

His many sons and his household You hanged on the gallows.

כְּרוֹת קוֹמַת בְּרוֹשׁ. בְּקֶשׁ אֲגָגִי בֶן הַמַּדְתָּא.

וְנִהְיְתָה לוֹ לַפֶּחַ וּלְמוֹקֵשׁ וְגִאָוֹתוֹ נִשְׁבְּתָה.

רֹאשׁ יְמִינִי נִשְׂאָתָּ וְאוֹיֵב שְׁמוֹ מְחִיתָ.

רַב בָּנָיו וְקִנְיָנָיו עַל הָעֵץ תִּלְחִיתָ.

Then the Greeks gathered against me, in the days of the Hasmoneans.

They broke down the walls of my towers, and defiled all the oils.

But from the last remaining flask a miracle was wrought for Your beloved.

Therefore the sages ordained these eight days for song and praise.

יְוָנִים נִקְבְּצוּ עָלַי אִזִּי בַּיָּמֵי חַשְׁמוֹנַיִם.

וּפְרָצוּ חוֹמוֹת מִגְדְּלֵי וְטַמְאוּ כָּל הַשְּׁמֵנִים.

וּמִנְחוֹתַר קַנְקְנָיִם נַעֲשֶׂה נֵס לְשׁוֹשְׁנִים.

כִּי בֵּינָה יָמֵי שְׁמוֹנָה קִבְּעוּ שִׁיר וּרְנָנִים.

Bare Your holy arm, and hasten the time of salvation.

Take retribution on behalf of Your servants, against the evil nation.

For the hour [of deliverance] has been too long delayed; there seems no end to the evil days.

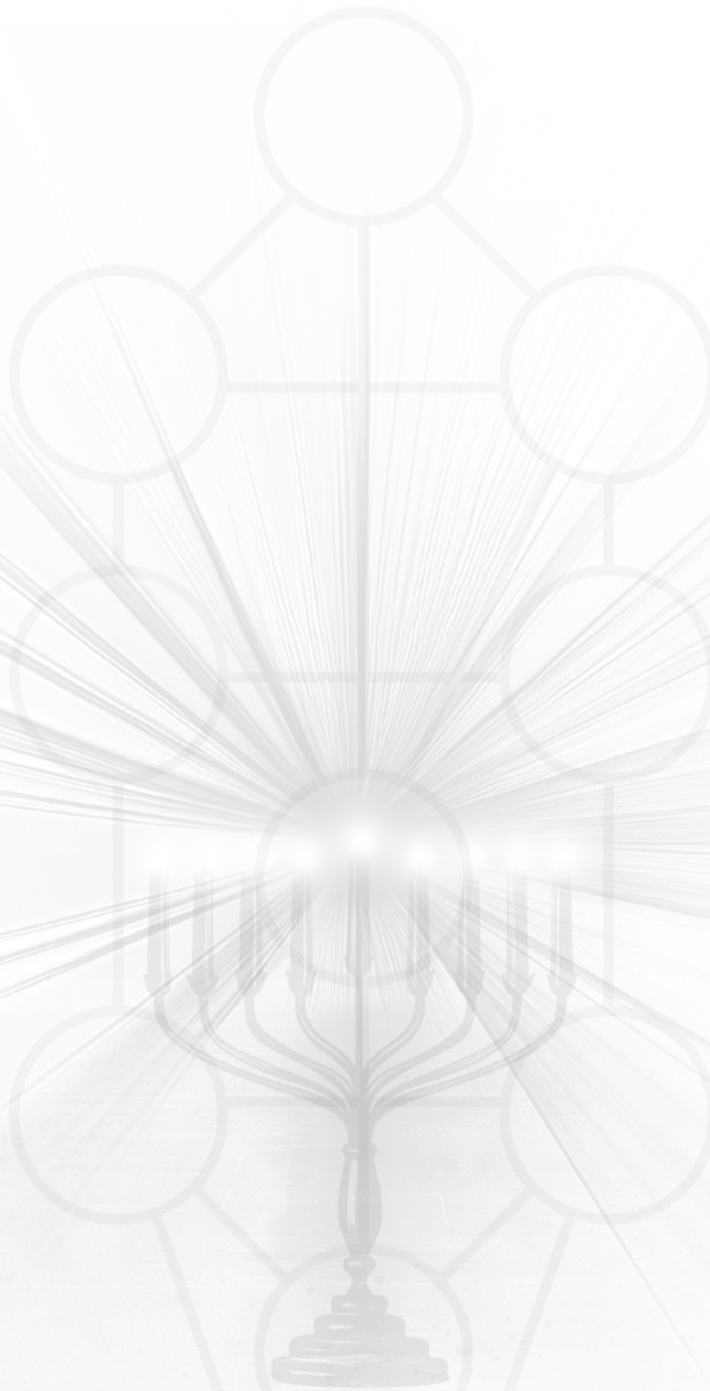
Thrust the enemy into the darkness of death, and establish for us the seven Shepherds.

חֲשׂוּר וְרוּעַ קֹדֶשְׁךָ וְקָרַב קֵץ הַיְשׁוּעָה.

נִקְם נִקְמַת דָּם עֲבָדֶיךָ מֵאִמְפָּה הַרְשָׁעָה.

כִּי אַרְכָּה לָנוּ הַשָּׁעָה וְאִזּוֹ קֵץ לִימֵי הַרְעָה.

דַּחַח אֲדַמּוּן בְּצַל צִלְמוֹן הַקָּם לָנוּ רוּעָה שְׁבַעָה.



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