**Zos Chanukah**

The eigth day of chanukah is called “zos Chanukah.” This is based on the leining of that day when we read “Vzos Chanukas Hamizbeach”. What is the significance of the eighth day of Chanukah?

I want to share some ideas from the Sfas Emes, and really the comments of the Sfas Emes are built on another idea that we developed at great length in the sefer “Ner Mitzvah v’Torah Ohr.” There are many connections between Chanukah and Sukkos. The Sfas Emes writes the following idea. The most famous question about Chanukah is why is Chanukah eight days long? There was enough oil for the first day so the miracle only lasted for seven days. There are many answers to this question. The Sfas Emes and others say that Chazal established Chanukah to be eight days long in order to correspond to the eight days of Sukkos including Shemini Atzeres. (See the Sfas Emes on Chanukah year 5644 and the end of year 5640.)

We find a similar idea in the Aruch Hashulchan (670:5). The Aruch Hashulchan quotes for the Sefer Chashmonaim that because of the gzeiros that year, Bnei Yisrael were not able to bring the Korbanos that year on Sukkos and Shemini Atzeres. And therefore as a zecher to that, the Rabanan at that time made Chanukah eight days long. The eight days of Chanukah were supposed to correspond to the missing days of korbanos from Sukkos from that year.

Zos chanukah is therefore compared directly to Shemini Atzeres. We have discussed many times that Shemini Atzeres reflects the idea of maintaining that which we have gained during Sukkos. Atzeres means to stop, maintain your position. And Hashem gives us a special day of yom tov which we use to focus on absorbing all of the ideas that we have thought about and hopefully gained over Sukkos[[1]](#endnote-1).

And that is exactly what Zos Chanukah is all about. The Sfas Emes writes (Chanukah year 5642-43) that Zos Chanukah reflects the idea that it is “nishar le’olam”, it lasts forever. (See also Sfas Emes end of year 5640 and the end of year 5634). The Sfas Emes explains that “Zos chanukah kayam le’olam”.[[2]](#endnote-2) I found a similar idea in the Shem Mishmuel (Chanukah years 5674 and 5677). He quotes the Sifri in Parshas Matos that contrasts the nevuah of Moshe Rabbeinu to the nevuah of the other neviim. The word generally used by neviim is “Koh” as opposed to Moshe Rabbeinu, the word normally used is “Zeh” as in “Zeh Hadavar” or “Zos Hatorah.” The Shem Mishmuel explains that this means that it is “kayam le’olam”, that Moshe Rabbeinu’s nevuah was Torah that lasts forever. Therefore, the word “zeh” and the word “zos” reflect nitzchiyus, reflect the idea of lasting forever.

So it fits perfectly. The eighth day of Chanukah is the day when we are supposed to gather in all of the ideas that we have been discussing and thinking about over Chanukah, and absorb them. So that when Chanukah ends, the impact of all of these ideas remains. Just like how on the eighth day of Sukkos we are supposed to gather in and maintain that which we gained on Sukkos.

We know the Menorah is placed opposite the Mezzuzah. The Sfas Emes points out in several places (see for example Chanukah year 5665) that just like the Mezzuzah is “fixed in the pesach le’olam”, so to the reshimah, the effect, of the ner Chanukah should be “nishar kavuah”, should always be there. The ner Chanukah is supposed to always have an impact on us beyond Chanukah. This is the idea of Zos Chanukah and it is exactly parallel to that of Shemini Atzeres.

The Sfas Emes goes even further. The Torah leining on Zos Chanukah is the end of Parshas Naso followed by the very beginning of Parshas Bahaalosecha, where the lighting of the Menorah is mentioned. Exactly. The Sfas Emes explains (Chanukah years 5640 and 5642-43) that the dedication of the Mishkan leads into the lighting of the Menorah. As we discussed, the lighting of the Menorah represents the Torah SheBe’al Peh, and the lighting of our Menorah is viewed as the Hemshech, continuation, of the lighting of the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash as the Ramban explains at the beginning of Parshas BeHa’alosecha. Therefore, the Kriyas Hatorah on Zos Chanukah represents exactly this idea of continuity. The Chanukas Hamishkan of the Nesiim, which we read about on Chanukah, continues, in that the Chanukas Hamishkan lead to the lighting of the Menorah, and the lighting of the Menorah leads to the lighting on Chanukah b’zman hazeh. Zos Chanukah represents a continuity of the lessons of Chanukah.

One of the main lessons of Chanukah that we focus on is Torah SheBea’l Peh. Today on Zos Chanukah we have to fully commit ourselves to believing in the Torah SheBe’al Peh and following the Torah SheBe’al Peh as it was transmitted to us by our great Torah leaders. We have to commit ourselves to learn the Torah SheBe’al Peh. Every ben Torah should make a plan to finish Shas Mishnayos and to ultimately finish Shas itself. If a person learns two mishnayos a day, he’ll finish one seder of Mishnayos every year. If he commits to learning 4 mishnayos a day, he’ll finish a seder every six months. If a person starts Amud Yomi today, he’ll finish Shas in around 15 years. It’s a very good idea. Chanukah is the time to make that commitment and Zos Chanukah is the time to concretize that commitment. It might be difficult, but one lesson we learn from the Chashmonaim is to be moser nefesh for limud Torah. We need to express that mesirus nefesh in our commitment.

Let us all absorb the message of Zos Chanukah and take the messages of Chanukah and absorb them as part of our lives.

Zos Chanukah.

1. Rav Hirsch (Vayikra p. 685-686) explains the following idea. The root ‘atzar’ in Hebrew means to stop, to retain, to maintain one’s position. Shmini Atzeres is celebrated at the end of Succos. Based on this, Rav Hirsch writes

we think the word atzeres means to designate a day which is not fixed to bring new lessons and new truths for us to accept and assimilate, but which has the mission to keep us still before the presence of Hashem, to strengthen and solidify the impressions and knowledge we have already gained, so that they remain with us permanently and do not become lost in the hurley burley of life.

A person experiences yom tov, and during yom tov there are additional mitzvos and more kedushah, more ruchnius; therefore, a person naturally grows in his Avodas Hashem. But then the special yom tov period ends, and the challenge becomes to maintain and retain that which we have gained during yom tov. Rav Hirsch continues, “persistence, remaining with Hashem and holding fast to all the spiritual acquisitions obtained, that is the meaning of atzeres.” This is why Shmini Atzeres is called ‘Atzeres’. At the end of Succos, we have a day set aside for absorbing and solidifying that which we gained during Succos. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The Sfas Emes refers to a posuk in DIvrei Hayamim 1:29:18 which links Zos and Le’olam. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)