

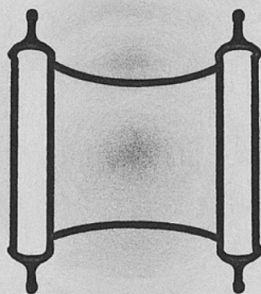
בס"ד

**Alter Rebbe**

**Torah Ohr**

**Chanukah**

עֲנֵינוּ חֲנוּכָּה



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## Alter Rebbe Torah Ohr Parshas Miketz & Chanukah

### ענין חנוכה

### Introduction

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), known as the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad Chassidut and author of the Tanya, delivered this maamar to illuminate the inner meaning of Chanukah, the nature of mitzvot, and the dynamics of divine love within the soul. This maamar weaves together Halachah, Midrash, Kabbalah, and experiential avodah to explain why Chanukah is uniquely commemorated through light, and how the mitzvah–Torah relationship generates an ever-deepening bond between the Jew and the Infinite.

The subject of Chanukah. Behold, they established the miracle through the lights. This is unlike the other miracles.	ענין חנוכה. הנה קבעו הנס בצרות. משאין כן בשאר נסים
On Pesach, in the exodus from Egypt, you shall eat matzot. On Purim, days of feasting and joy.	כפסח ביציאת מצרים תאכלו מצות בפורים ימי משתה ושמחה
Corresponding to the exile, which was also physical. In Egypt, with mortar and bricks.	כנגד הגלות שהיה גם כן גופני במצרים בחמר ובלבנים
And in the days of Haman, he sought to destroy, etcetera, and their spoil for plunder.	ובימי המן בקש להשמיד כו' ושללם לבז
This is not so with Chanukah, for Israel were dwelling on their land and were not exiled from their land.	משאין כן בחנוכה שהיו ישראל שרויים על אדמתם ולא גלו מארצם
Rather, there was an exile of the Torah, to make them forget Your Torah and to cause them to transgress the statutes of Your will.	רק גלות התורה להשפיקם תורתך ולהעבירם חקי רצונך
Therefore, they established it through lights, on account of the verse.	לפיכך קבעו בצרות על שם הפסוק
“For a commandment is a lamp and the Torah is light, and the way of life is reproofs of discipline” (Proverbs 6:23).	משלי ו:כ"ג) כי נר מצוה ותורה אור ודרך חיים) תוכחות מוסר
To understand the matter of this verse, and also the latter part of the verse which states “and the way of life,” etcetera, requires explanation.	ולהבין ענין פסוק זה וגם סיפא דקרא דכתיב ודרך חיים וגו' צריך באור
What “way of life” is this, beyond the Torah and the commandments mentioned earlier in the verse.	איזה דרך חיים הוא מלבד התורה והמצוות האמורה למעלה בפסוק
The matter is as follows. That which the commandment is compared to a lamp and the Torah to light is understood.	והענין כי מה שהמשיל המצוה לנר והתורה לאור הוא מוכן
Just as a lamp is called by the name of the oil, as in the language of our Sages, a lamp of oil, a lamp of wax.	שכמו שהנר נקרא על שם השמן כלשון רבותינו זקונם לברכה נר של שמן נר של שעווה

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Behold, even though the oil has no light in itself, and on the contrary extinguishes light that falls into it.	הנה אף על פי שהשמן אין בו אור מצד עצמו ואדרבה הוא מכבה את האור הנופל לתוכו
Nevertheless, from it and through it the flame of light is drawn, which clings to the wick through a small amount of oil drawn after the wick.	מכל מקום ממנו ועל ידו נמשך להב שלהבת האור הנאחז בפתילה במעט שמן הנמשך אחר הפתילה
For when the oil is consumed, the light is extinguished.	שהרי בכלות השמן נכבה האור
Thus it is precisely with the commandment. Even though it is the will of the King without any reason or understanding, and there is no comprehension in it.	ככה ממש היא המצוה הגם שהוא רצון המלך בלי שום טעם ונדעת ואין בה שום השגה
Nevertheless, from it and through it is drawn and revealed the light of wisdom. This is the Oral Torah, for the Torah emerges from wisdom.	מכל מקום ממנה ועל ידה נמשך ונתגלה אור החכמה זו תורה שבעל פה דאורייתא מחכמה נפקת
And the wisdom and understanding in the Oral Torah is only to understand and grasp the explanation and reason of the commandments.	והחכמה והבינה בתורה שבעל פה הוא רק להבין ולהשיג פרוש וטעם המצוות
Each tractate according to its subject. And an explanation of this matter in particular in the service of the Eternal.	כל מסכת לפי ענינה. וביאור ענין זה דרך פרט בעבודת ה'
Behold it is written, "In the morning, in the morning, when he prepares the lamps, he shall burn it," and "When Aaron kindles the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it" (Exodus 30:7-8).	הנה כתיב (שמות לז:ז-ח) בבקר בבקר בהיטיבו את הנרות קטירנה ובהעלות אהרן את הנרות בין הערבים קטירנה
To understand why regarding the morning it is written "when he prepares," and regarding twilight "when he kindles."	ולהבין למה גבי בבקר כתיב בהיטיבו ובין הערבים בהעלות
Behold, the Congregation of Israel, the source of the souls of Israel, is called by the name Menorah, and it is beaten from one piece.	הנה כנסת ישראל מקור נשמות ישראל נקראת בשם מנורה והיא מקשה
All Israel are in unity, and it is divided into seven lamps.	שכל ישראל הם באחדות והיא מתחלקת לשבעה נרות
For in particular there are six hundred thousand general sparks, and each spark divides into six hundred thousand individual sparks, as explained in Tanya.	כי דרך פרט יש ששים רבוא ניצוצות כלליות שכל ניצוץ מתחלק לששים רבוא ניצוצות פרטיות כמבואר בתניא
And in a general way they are included in the seventy souls that descended to Egypt.	ודרך כלל נכללו בשבעים נפש שירדו אבותינו למצרים
And the general of the general is called by the name seven lamps.	וכלל מן הכלל נקרא בשם שבעה נרות



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For behold, Aaron, the attendant of the Matron, is Aaron, priest to the Most High, from the seven shepherds.	דהנה אהרן שושבינא דמטרוניתא הוא אהרן כהן לצל עליון משבעה רועים
They sustain and bestow His Godliness into the Congregation of Israel, that they should shine with the light of love.	המפרנסים ומשפיעים אלהותו יתברך בכנסת ישראל שיאירו באור האהבה
To inflame toward Him, may He be blessed, with the expiration of the soul, like a flame that rises of itself.	להתלהט אליו יתברך בכלות הנפש כשלהבת העולה מאליה
And to fulfill the commandment of "You shall love," which they accept upon themselves in the recitation of Shema.	ולקיים מצות ואהבת שמקבלים עליהם בקריאת שמע
That it be so in truth, truly embedded in the heart of each and every one of Israel.	שיהיה כך באמת לאמתו תקוע בלב כל אחד ואחד מישראל
For a person on his own, since he is corporeal and clothed in physical matters, would not be able, were it not that the Holy One blessed be He helps him.	שהאדם מצד עצמו מאחר שהוא מגושם ומלוכלש בעננים גשמיים לא היה יכול לולי הקדוש ברוך הוא עוזרו
And the assistance is love that comes from Above, to draw him toward Him. This corresponds to the aspects of "when he kindles" and "when he prepares."	והעזר הוא אהבה הבאה מלמעלה להמשיכו אליו. וזהו בחינת בהעלות ובהיטיבו
For behold, our Sages said: even though the fire descends from the heavens, it is a commandment to bring it from the ordinary person. (Yoma 21b)	כי הנה אמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה אף על פי שהאש יורד מן השמים מצוה להביא מן ההדיוט
The meaning of "ordinary" is the love that a person takes because of the worlds, from the aspect of His sovereignty.	פרוש הדיוט הוא האהבה שאדם לוקח מחמת העולמות מבחינת מלכותו יתברך
That He is a great and awesome King over all the worlds, supernal and lower.	שהוא מלך גדול ונורא על כל העולמות עליונים ותחתונים
And all the hosts of heaven bow to You, and a thousand thousands and myriads of myriads stand before Him, etcetera.	וכל צבא השמים לה משתחוים ואלף אלפין ורבו רבבן קדמוהי כו'
As explained in the Talmud and in the Zohar, in elucidating the matter of the multiplicity of the worlds and His greatness.	כמבואר בגמרא ובזוהר בבאור ענין רבוי העולמות וגדולתו
And according to this, the Sages instituted to say "Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever" before "You shall love." (Deuteronomy 6:5)	ועל דרך זה תקנו חכמים לומר ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד לפני ואהבת
For behold, we say: singular, living of the worlds, King, praised and glorified forever and ever is His great Name, etcetera.	כי הנה אנו אומרים יחיד חי העולמים מלך משבח ומפאך עדי עד שמו הגדול כו'
The meaning of "singular" is above the aspect of "one." For "one" means, as our Sages say, one in heaven and on earth and in the four directions of the world.	פרוש יחיד הוא למעלה מבחינת אחד. כי אחד היינו כמאמר רבותינו זכרונם לברכה שהוא אחד בשמים ובארץ ובארבע רוחות העולם

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For all the supernal worlds do not occupy space to be an entity and a separate thing in themselves.

פי כל העולמות העליונים אינם תופסים מקום להיות יש ודבר נפרד בפני עצמם

And all is before Him as nothing and as nonexistence, truly considered so, and there is nothing besides Him.

ובכל קמיה פלא וקאין נגדו חשיבי ממש ואין עוד (Deuteronomy 4:35) מלבדו

Therefore He is called "one," meaning when He is evaluated in relation to the worlds.

לכן נקרא אחד והיינו כשמעריכים אותו נגד העולמות

But "singular" means He is singular and unique in Himself alone, and He alone exists, not within the category of the worlds at all.

אבל יחיד פרוש הוא יחיד ומיוחד בפני עצמו והוא לבדו הוא ואינו בגדר העולמות כלל

"Living of the worlds, King" means that all the vitality of the worlds, which gives life to all of them and brings them into being, supernal and lower, exists only because He is King.

וחי העולמים מלך פרוש שכל חיות העולמות שממנה את כלם ומנה את כלם עליונים ותחתונים

All of them receive vitality from the aspect of His Kingship, may He be blessed, solely because He is King over them.

אינו אלא בשביל שהוא מלך וכלם מקבלים חיות מבחינת מלכותו יתברך בעבור היותו מלך עליהם

Likewise, that He is praised and glorified, meaning the praise that comes from apprehending His greatness, is forever.

וכן מה שהוא משבח ומפאר דהיינו השבח מחמת שמשגיגים גדולתו הוא עדי עד

For His greatness has no limit, and above there is praise after praise and elevation after elevation, without end or conclusion.

פי לגדולתו אין חקר ולמעלה יש שבח אחר שבח ועלוי אחר עלוי עד אין קץ ואין תכלית

And all of this is solely for His great Name, for only that His Name and His Kingship be called upon them.

והכל הוא בעבור שמו הגדול פי להיות נקרא שמו ומלכותו עליהם בלבד

It cannot touch the aspect of His Essence and Being at all, for no thought can grasp Him whatsoever.

הוא ואינו יכול לנגוע לבחינת עצמותו ומהותו כלל פי לית מחשבה תפיסה ביה כלל

For He is singular and unique, and His Name alone is exalted, as it is written: "Your Kingship is a Kingship of all worlds." (Psalms 145:13)

שהוא יחיד ומיוחד ונשגב שמו לבדו כדכתיב מלכותך (מלכות כל עולמים) (תהלים קמ"ה:י"ג)

This is the meaning of: "In the place where you find His greatness, there you find His humility."

וזהו במקום שאתה מוצא גדולתו שם אתה מוצא ענותנותו

As it is written: "He lowers Himself to look upon heaven and earth," which for Him, may He be blessed, is considered humility.

כדכתיב המשפילי לראות בשמים ובארץ שאצלו (יתברך נחשב זאת להשפלה ולענוה) (תהלים קי"ג:ו')

To give life to the spirit of the lowly. Likewise what is written: "He supports the fallen, heals the sick, and straightens the bent."

להחיות רוח שפלים וכן מה שכתוב סומך נופלים (ורופא חולים וזוקף כפופים) (תהלים קמ"ה:י"ד)

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And the entire realm is called “earth,” like this lowly earth, a descent from the place of His glory.

וכל הממלכה נקראת בשם ארץ להיות פארץ הלזו  
השפלה שירדה ממקום כבודו

That His Name be called as King. Therefore every created being should understand this.

להיות מלך שמו נקרא ולכן זאת יבין כל יצור

When one sets it upon his heart and broadens his understanding of His greatness and wondrous deeds.

בשמו אל לבו וירחיב דעתו בגדולתו ותפארתו  
ונפלאות מעשיו

In the multiplicity of the worlds without limit, he will comprehend that this itself is His humility.

ברבוי העולמות עד אין חקר הנה ישכיל שגורו  
ענותנותו ותפארתו

For there is no comparison to Him, as He is not within the category of worlds at all.

ואין צורך אליו שאינו בגדר עלמין כלל

He is the One who equalizes and makes equal small and great. Consequently, the soul and heart will ignite and blaze for the light, with the light of love, with all your soul in actuality.

והוא השווה ומשווה קטן וגדול ממילא תתלהט  
ותתלהב נפש ולב לאור באור האהבה בכל נפש  
ממש

To depart from the category of the worlds, as it is said: “Whom have I in heaven but You, and with You I desire nothing on earth; my flesh and my heart are spent.” (Psalms 73:25–26)

לצאת מגדר העולמות כמאמר מי לי בשמים ועמך  
לא תפצתי בארץ כלה שארי ולבבי (תהלים  
(ע"ג:כ"ה—כ"ו

This is the meaning of “You shall love the Lord your God.” Love is from the root “desire” and “will.” (Deuteronomy 6:5)

וזהו ואהבת את ה' אלהיך כי אהבה משרש אבה  
(שהוא מלשון חפץ ורצון (דברים ו':ה'

Meaning the will of the heart, that the Lord your God be desired, and to cleave to Him in actuality.

דהיינו רעותא דלפא שיהיה ה' אלהיך ולדבקה בו  
ממש

Through this arousal from below, the light of love from above rests upon him, to enlarge the bonfire of love in his heart beyond human capacity.

ועל ידי אתערותא דלתתא זו יחול עליו אור האהבה  
מלמעלה להגדיל מדורת אש האהבה בלבבו

More than the power of the soul and its root, which is limited and created, to draw near to the Lord in actuality with complete self-nullification.

יותר מכדי כח אנושי ושרש נשמתו שהיא בגדר  
וגבול ונבכר לקרבה אל ה' ממש ובטול אליו  
במצאות ממש

This comes through the aspect of Aaron the High Priest, for “You shall love” in numerical value is twice “light.”

על ידי בחינת אהרן כהנא רבא כי ואהבת בגימטריא  
פעמים אור

This aspect is called “when he prepares,” from goodness and supernal kindness that bestows upon the spirit of the lowly to enhance the love below.

ונקראת בחינה זו בהיטיבו שמשטוב וחסד עליון  
משפיע על רוח שפלים להיטיב ולהגדיל את האהבה  
שקמטה

However, in truth, even the arousal from below, that a person desires to cleave to Him in actuality, is also a gift of God.

אף הנה באמת גם אתערותא דלתתא כנ"ל אשר  
יחפץ האדם לדבקה בו ממש גם זאת מתת אלהים  
היא

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It is not according to the power, temperament, or disposition of the human soul. This is called “when Aaron kindles.”

לא לפי כח נפש האדם ומזגו ותכונתו ונקראת בחינת ובהעלות אהרן

For the supernal Aaron grants strength to the Congregation of Israel to arouse this love.

שאהרן העליון הוא הנותן כח בכנסת ישראל לעורר את האהבה הזו

This is “between the evenings,” which is the quality of mixture, night and darkness, that has no light of its own.

וזהו בין הערבים שהוא מדת ערב ולילה וחשך מצד עצמו שאין בו אור

But the quality of morning is the attribute of Abraham, the man of kindness, as it is said: “And Abraham arose early in the morning.” (Genesis 21:14)

אבל מדת בקר שהיא מדת אברהם איש החסד (במאמר וישפם אברהם בבקר (בראשית כ"א:י"ד

This corresponds to “when he prepares.” See further what is written later regarding rejoicing at night and joy in the morning.

הוא בחינת בהיטיבו (וענין מה שנתבאר לקמן בדבור המתחיל רני ושמחי בענין רננא ברמשא ושמחה (בצפרא

Who is the person that can reach this level, that the supernal Aaron should reach him? It is through Torah and commandments.

והנה מי זה האדם שגייע עד הלום שגייע אליו בחינת אהרן העליון אבל הוא על ידי תורה ומצות

For a commandment is a lamp. The commandments are drawn from a very exalted place, therefore they have no intellectual grasp at all.

כי נר מצוה שהמצות נמשכות ממקום גבוה מאד נעלה ולפיכך אין בהן השגה כלל

Like the analogy of oil mentioned above, they do not enter the inner soul, but surround it from above.

כמשל השמן הנ"ל שאינם נכנסים בפנימיות נפשם רק בבחינת מקור עליהם מלמעלה

As it is written: “You shall surely set a king over yourself,” like a king who rules over his people. (Deuteronomy 17:15)

במאמר שום תשים עליך מלך כמו מלך המושל על (עמו (דברים י"ז:ט"ו

He is exalted above them, and they do his will without reason or understanding, for it is the command of the King.

והוא גבוה עליהם והם עושים רצונו בלי טעם ודעת כי מצות המלך היא

By way of analogy, like a person who grasps the king by one of his limbs and draws him toward himself.

אף מכל מקום הוא על דרך משל כאדם שתופס את המלך באחד מאבריו וממשיכו אליו

Then even the vitality within him is drawn after him, as it is written: “His right hand embraces me.” (Song of Songs 2:6)

הנה גם חיותו שבקרבו נמשך אחריו כך כתיב וימינו (תחבקני (שיר השירים ב:ו

For the 248 positive commandments are the 248 limbs of the King, and through drawing the commandments, His unity is drawn after them.

כי הנה רמ"ח מצות עשה הם רמ"ח אבריו דמלכא ועל ידי המשיכת המצות ממילא נמשך אחריו

His blessed unity itself, in His essence and glory, in the aspect of His unity as explained above.

בחינת יחודו ותבדודו ובכבודו בבחינת יחודו כנ"ל

### [NOTE Summary:

The Alter Rebbe begins by explaining why Chanukah is commemorated specifically through lighting candles,

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unlike Pesach and Purim, which are marked by physical acts such as eating matzah or feasting. Pesach and Purim addressed physical threats to the Jewish people: enslavement in Egypt and annihilation under Haman. Chanukah, however, addressed a spiritual exile. The Greeks did not exile the Jews from their land but sought to sever them from Torah by making them forget divine wisdom and violate the statutes of God's will. Since the struggle was spiritual, the commemoration is likewise spiritual: light.

This leads to the verse "For a mitzvah is a lamp and Torah is light, and the way of life is reproofs of discipline." The Alter Rebbe explains that mitzvot are compared to a lamp and Torah to light because, like oil, mitzvot themselves possess no revealed illumination or intellectual grasp. Oil by itself produces no light and even extinguishes flame, yet it is precisely oil that enables the flame to burn. Similarly, mitzvot are expressions of God's will beyond human comprehension, yet through them the light of divine wisdom is drawn down and revealed. Torah, particularly the Oral Torah, emerges from Chochmah and provides understanding, explanation, and meaning to the mitzvot, each tractate according to its subject.

The maamar then applies this symbolism to avodat Hashem. The Congregation of Israel is likened to a single Menorah, hammered from one piece, representing the essential unity of all Jewish souls. Though souls appear diverse and innumerable, they are rooted in unity and structured through seven primary spiritual channels, corresponding to the seven lamps of the Menorah. Aaron the Kohen, described as the shushvina d'matronita, serves as the intermediary who draws divine vitality into the souls of Israel, igniting within them love for God like a flame rising on its own.

The Torah describes two expressions regarding the Menorah: "when he prepares the lamps" in the morning and "when he kindles the lamps" in the evening. These describe two forms of divine love. One is love that comes from above, exceeding human capacity, ignited by divine kindness. The other is arousal from below, love generated by human contemplation of God's kingship, greatness, and the vastness of creation. Even though heavenly fire descends on its own, a human must still bring fire from below. Contemplating God as King of innumerable worlds, served by endless hosts, awakens awe and love rooted in His sovereignty.

This is why the sages instituted the declaration "Blessed is the Name of the glory of His kingship forever and ever" before "You shall love." The Alter Rebbe distinguishes between "One" and "Singular." "One" describes God's unity relative to the worlds, which have no independent existence before Him. "Singular" describes His absolute transcendence beyond all worlds entirely. All praise, greatness, and exaltation relate only to His Name and Kingship, not to His Essence, which remains utterly beyond thought or grasp.

Paradoxically, God's greatness is revealed through His humility. Where His greatness is found, there His humility is found. His sustaining of the lowly, healing the broken, and ruling creation is considered humility relative to His infinite transcendence. The very act of creating and sustaining worlds is a descent from His true exaltedness. Recognizing this leads a person to deeper awe and love, realizing that all existence reflects divine humility rather than divine limitation.



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From this understanding, the soul naturally ignites with love, longing to transcend the confines of all worlds and cleave to God alone, echoing the cry “Whom have I in heaven but You.” Love is defined as desire and will, a heartfelt yearning to bind oneself to God in actuality. Through human arousal from below, divine love descends from above, intensifying the flame beyond the soul’s natural limits and drawing the person into genuine self-nullification before God.

Yet even the desire to arouse love from below is itself a divine gift. True spiritual awakening is not proportionate to human temperament or capacity. This higher ignition is called “when Aaron kindles,” while the love drawn from supernal kindness is called “when he prepares.” Evening represents darkness and mixture, where light does not arise naturally, while morning represents the attribute of Abraham, kindness and illumination.

Ultimately, the means to reach this supernal love is through Torah and mitzvot. Mitzvot originate from an exalted source beyond comprehension, surrounding the soul like oil rather than entering it internally. Yet by performing them, one grasps the King, so to speak, and draws His vitality and unity along with them. The 248 positive commandments correspond to the 248 limbs of the King, and through attachment to mitzvot, one draws God’s unity itself into their life, achieving true closeness through action even where understanding cannot reach.

**Practical Takeaway:**

The maamar teaches that spiritual growth does not depend on emotional talent or intellectual brilliance, but on faithful action. Even when mitzvot feel dry or inaccessible, they are the oil that sustains the flame. Through consistent performance of Torah and mitzvot, a person draws divine light into their life, awakens love beyond natural limits, and achieves genuine connection with God. Chanukah reminds us that enduring spiritual illumination comes not from understanding alone, but from humble, steady devotion that allows God’s light to burn within us.

**Chassidic Story:**

It is told that once a simple Chassid approached the Alter Rebbe before Chanukah and said, “Rebbe, I do not understand lofty ideas, and my heart does not burn with love during prayer. What do my candles accomplish?”

The Alter Rebbe replied, “Tell me, when oil is poured into a lamp, does the oil understand the flame?”

The Chassid answered, “No.”

“Yet without the oil,” said the Alter Rebbe, “the flame cannot burn. Your lighting, even without understanding, allows God’s light to shine. Do not underestimate the power of faithful action.”

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That Chanukah, the Chassid lit with renewed devotion. Years later, he testified that his heart slowly awakened, not through sudden inspiration, but through years of steady mitzvah-light, until love arose on its own, like a flame climbing heavenward.

**Therapeutic Psychological Integration (TPX)**

**Reframing Chanukah: When Light Comes Before Feeling**

The Alter Rebbe's teaching on Chanukah offers a psychologically sophisticated model of emotional growth that runs counter to modern intuition. Most people assume that feeling must come first and action later: first inspiration, then commitment. This maamar quietly but firmly reverses the order. Light precedes warmth. Action precedes emotion. Commitment precedes clarity.

Chanukah was not a rescue from physical danger but from spiritual erosion. The Greeks did not threaten Jewish bodies; they targeted meaning, memory, and inner coherence. In modern language, this was not trauma to survival but trauma to identity. When identity is threatened, the repair must occur at the level of inner illumination, not external relief. That is why Chanukah is commemorated with light rather than food or celebration.

The Alter Rebbe explains that a mitzvah is like oil. Oil is psychologically counterintuitive. It has no warmth. It produces no light on its own. It even extinguishes flame if misused. Yet it is the only substance that can sustain fire over time. This maps precisely onto human behavior. Many healthy actions feel emotionally flat at first: routines, boundaries, commitments, values. They do not immediately soothe or inspire. Sometimes they even feel constricting. But they are what allow emotional vitality to emerge and endure.

**Two Kinds of Love: Bottom-Up and Top-Down**

The maamar distinguishes between two forms of love. One emerges from below, through reflection, effort, and meaning-making. This is the love a person generates by contemplating purpose, values, and the vastness of existence. In psychological terms, this is cognitive-emotional integration: using understanding to cultivate feeling.

The second love descends from above. It exceeds personal capacity, temperament, and emotional skill. It is not earned by insight or personality traits. It arrives unexpectedly, often after long periods of dryness. This resembles what clinicians recognize as corrective emotional experience: moments when something larger than the self intervenes and reorganizes the emotional system.

Crucially, the Alter Rebbe insists that even the desire to try is itself not self-generated. The impulse to grow, to connect, to reach beyond one's limits is already help from above. This reframes self-criticism. If motivation itself is a gift, then lack of motivation is not moral failure. It is a signal to lean more heavily into structure and action rather than waiting for feeling.

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### **Why Night Comes Before Morning**

The Torah's language of evening and morning is not poetic coincidence. Night represents emotional mixture, confusion, heaviness, and low visibility. Morning represents clarity, warmth, and kindness. The Alter Rebbe teaches that illumination does not begin in the morning. It begins in the night. Love that appears in darkness is not born from emotional ease but from persistence.

This matters deeply for modern inner life. Many people judge themselves harshly during periods of numbness, distraction, or spiritual fatigue. The maamar reframes those states as the precise conditions in which deeper light is formed. Night is not the absence of growth. It is the environment that allows growth beyond the limits of personality.

### **Action as Attachment**

Perhaps the most radical psychological insight in this teaching is the claim that mitzvot create attachment even without emotional awareness. The Alter Rebbe compares mitzvot to grasping a king's limb. One does not need to comprehend the king's mind to be connected to him. Physical contact alone draws vitality.

Translated into modern terms, consistent value-aligned behavior creates attachment to meaning even when feelings lag behind. Showing up matters more than feeling ready. Structure precedes intimacy. Repetition precedes passion. This is not mechanical religion; it is emotional realism.

### **Practical Takeaway**

If you are waiting to feel inspired before committing, you may wait indefinitely. Instead, choose small, faithful actions aligned with your values and perform them steadily, without demanding emotional payoff. Treat action as oil, not fire. Over time, warmth will appear, often quietly and unexpectedly. Growth is not the result of emotional intensity. It is the result of staying lit long enough for light to catch.

### **Contemporary Story**

A therapist once worked with a client who felt spiritually disconnected and emotionally flat. The client kept saying, "When I feel something, I'll start practicing again." After months of stagnation, the therapist suggested one small, non-negotiable ritual: five minutes every night of intentional silence, no insight required.

At first, the ritual felt empty and mechanical. Weeks passed. Then one night, without warning, the client felt a sudden tenderness and grief, followed by calm. Nothing had changed externally. The structure had simply held long enough for something deeper to surface.

Later, the client said, "I thought the practice was supposed to create the feeling. I didn't realize it was creating the space for the feeling to arrive."

That is Chanukah psychology. Light does not begin with fire. It begins with oil, patiently waiting to burn.

**END NOTE]**

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