

THAT'S CHANUKAH

by Rabbi Label Lam

It was the last day of Chanukah on a Sunday. We got the call early in the morning. The house was filled with excitement. A young lady we knew very well, who is now a mother of a wonderful Jewish family, was studying for conversion at that time and she had finally gotten the "go ahead". When she called us that morning she enthusiastically shared with us her beautiful new Jewish name, and invited us to a small Chanukah party. My wife and I made the long trek out to Long Island. She was brimming with joy surrounded by supportive families and friends. The table was filled with brunch goodies and we all sat down to eat -sing and celebrate.

At one moment one of the lead Rabbis there nudged me gently and said, "Nu Reb Label, say something!" I have to admit I was woefully unprepared for the sudden invitation. I asked him if we can sing another song and we did. During the musical interlude a question occurred to me that I am not sure if I heard from a reliable source or if I had thought of it myself. I apologize for not remembering. This is what I shared!

Why is this day, the eighth day of Chanukah titled "Zos Chanukah"? Of all the days of Chanukah, that name "Zos Chanukah", why should the eighth day after all the candles are extinguished be called "Zos Chanukah"? Usually the word Zos or Zeh - "this" is reserved for times when there's something to point to.

When the Jewish people went through the split sea they declared, "This is my G-d..." Rashi tells us that they all witnessed loftiest of visions... When Moshe was introduced to the Mitzvah of the new month he was told, "this month is for you..." Again we are informed by Rashi that Moshe was shown a sliver of the moon. In each case the word "Zeh"-"this" means something was at hand.

Similarly when a Torah scroll is lifted in synagogue congregants gather around and point with their finger while reciting, "This is the Torah that Moshe placed before the children of Israel by G-d through the agency of Moshe" Many are careful to position themselves to see the script inside the scroll while indicating with a finger. Why? So the declaration should be truthful.

Why is this time without visuals called "Zos Chanukah"? The simple answer is that over the course of the eight days of Chanukah we read in the Torah about the inaugural activities of the heads of the tribes which concludes on the eighth day of Chanukah when we say, "this is the inauguration of the

altar". It is followed by Aaron's invitation to light the menorah of the Tabernacle. It is because of those words, "Zos Chanukas HaMizbeach" "this is the dedication of the altar"- this day is titled based on the first two words, "Zos Chanukas...". Still there must be something more.

Chanukah is an expression of -Chinuch-education. How do we know when education has taken place? Sure when we look into the classroom and watch the teachers teaching the students learning we assume that that's education. However, that might just be the process of education. How can we measure when education has taken place?

One of my Rebbes used to tell us that the final exam, the symptom that Torah learning has been absorbed into psyche of the student is when one sees how they behave in the dining room and with each other after the classes are complete. Here too, after the lights are out, after eight full days of lighting the Chanukah candles, after all the scholastic activities are concluded a burning question remains. Somebody once came to a great Rabbi and boasted with extra pride, "Rabbi, I finished the entire Talmud!" The Rabbi, sensing his haughty attitude answered him sharply, "And what did the Talmud teach you?!"

After eight days of lighting the Chanukah candles, eight full days of expressing dedication- honoring the education process, we might wonder, "what have the candles ignited in us?!" When all the lights are out and there is no one there to watch, when all the teacher-types have retreated, then what remains, **that's Chanukah!** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).