



5780 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Miketz / פרשת מקץ Chanukah / חנוכה

Chanukat Yerushalayim

The word Chanukah stems from the word “Chinuch”, often translated as “education,” “dedication” or “inauguration.” At first glance, this root refers to the beginning of a process and in the context of Chanukah it is the rededication of the Beit Mikdash after the cessation of the service at the hands of the Greeks.

Rav Klonimus Kalman Shapira, the Piaseczna Rebbe, however, offers a deeper and more accurate understanding of this word. In the introduction to his book “Chovat HaTalmidim,” the Piaseczna Rebbe argues that “Chinuch” does not merely refer to the beginning of a process. Rather, it is the beginning of the unfurling of something that is latent inside. Therefore, beginning a new job or project is not necessarily referred to as “Chinuch,” but only the development and actualization of latent potential. In the view of the Piaseczna Rebbe, every Jewish child is born with a holy soul and can become a unique expression of divinity. Bringing out this potential is the precise definition of Chinuch.

With this in mind, it is important to return to the notion of “Chinuch” of the Beit HaMikdash. The Temple Mount is inherently holy. For reasons that are beyond our comprehension, God created this spot with boundless potential for connecting with Him. In this sense, what is required of the Beit HaMikdash is not the creation of something new, but rather the accessing of this inner potential. The ability for the Chashmonai’im to access the special qualities latent in this place is part of the cause for our Chanukah celebrations.

In this context it is also important to note that the term Chanukah and Chinuch are also applied to Yerushalayim. In the book of Nechemia we read:¹

And in the dedication (*chanukat*) of the wall of Jerusalem, they sought the Levites from all their places to bring them to Jerusalem to perform the dedication with joy, and with thanksgivings, and with song, cymbals, psalteries, and with harps.

¹ Nechemia 12:27. Translation is from Chabad.org.



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The walls of the city are not simply built, but they are inaugurated and dedicated. According to the Piaseczna Rebbe's definition of the word "Chinuch" this verse teaches us volumes about Yerushalayim. In the same way that every Jewish child is born with an innately spiritual soul, so too is the city of Yerushalayim graced with unique qualities. Our job is not to create the holiness there, but merely to sense it, embrace it and actualize it.

May we merit to truly fulfill the notion of Chanukat Yerushalayim!