

You Are the Light of the World

Parashat Miketz



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“Let there be light...”

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Holidays, this week we study the weekly Torah portion, "Parashat Miketz," and we also are celebrating Hanukkah. First of all, I want to talk about light. Hanukkah is a holiday that focuses on light, it is about triumphing over darkness and of victory for the weak over the strong. In fact, light was the first element created in the world, as it is written:

And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good... - Genesis 1:3,4a [NIV]

Light is typically thought of as a pleasant and enjoyable notion. It represents wisdom and enlightenment, beauty and love, joy, holiness, and sanctity. Light is also a tangible means of expression to mark the positive and good aspect of life; it points to an essence that has quality.

An example of this can be seen with Shabbat candles, which symbolize family peace and unity. In the Bible, the light is used as a symbol of grace, goodwill, and of a welcoming countenance, which can be found in the following verse:

...the Lord make his face shine on you... - Numbers 6:25a [NIV]

The Torah is also correlated to light:

For this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light... - Proverbs 6:23a [NIV]

The light of the Torah is found in its moral and social values.

The Hanukkah candles that we light on the windowsill remind us of the miracles of God, and by their merit alone we stand here as the people of Israel in the Promised Land.

Joseph Was a Light in the Darkness

Yeshua commanded us to produce light, that our lives and actions will illuminate our surroundings. Now I'd like to discuss Joseph who remained in Egypt and illuminated his environment with the help of his faith.

It is very noticeable throughout Joseph's story that he repeatedly mentions God, who was always standing beside him, directing his way and his morality.

We already saw this at the end of last week's Torah portion - Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him and he refused. He could control himself because he was afraid to sin before God:

...How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God? - Genesis 39:9b [NIV]

Before that occurred, Potiphar himself bore witness to the fact that Joseph was a believer, and that his strong faith made him a successful person.

The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the

Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did... - Genesis 39:2,3 [NIV]

Verse 3 emphasizes to us that Potiphar sees the faith and the success of Joseph.

Later on, Joseph was thrown into the Egyptian prison. However, even then he continued to brighten his surroundings. He found favor with the guards and the prisoners around him.

Now we come to our parasha, "Miketz", that begins with Pharaoh's dream. Joseph is brought out from prison and must stand before the king of the empire, who was the world superpower. At that moment, Joseph did not forget his faith, he declared to Pharaoh:

'I cannot do it,' Joseph replied to Pharaoh, 'but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.' - Genesis 41:16 [NIV]

Further, during the interpretation of the dream, Joseph repeatedly said:

...God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. - Genesis 41:25b [NIV]

My point is that Joseph emphasized in front of everyone that God was the one who was at work within him - to the extent that Pharaoh himself said before his people:

...Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God? - Genesis 41:38b [NIV]

After that he said to Joseph:

...Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. - Genesis 41:39 [NIV]

In the course of the parasha, Joseph met with his brothers, and before them he also declared:

...for I fear God... - Genesis 42:18 [NIV]

Our faith in Yeshua as Messiah makes us a lamp and servant of Yeshua. We serve as a menorah, where we sit on the windowsill and shine our light to the world. This is so we can show that there is hope, a way, a truth, and a light.

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. – Matthew 5:14-16 [NIV]

In conclusion

In order for illumination to take place, a ray of light must reflect off of a surface.

In other words, we can not illuminate an empty space at night if we simply aim our flashlight at the sky, the flashlight will not succeed in lighting our way. However, if a flashlight shines on a surface, like a wall, the rays of light will bounce off of it and brighten the way for us.

So too Yeshua calls us to be reflectors, that the light of the Torah and gospel will reflect off of us, so that we can light up the highway of the King. With this thought I would like to invite you to light the Hanukkah candles.

The Teachings of Messiah Yeshua *in a Jewish Context*

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