

MIKETZ { מִקֶּצֶת } (At the End of...)

Genesis 41:1-44:17; 1 Kings 3:15-4:1; Matthew 27:13-46

**A Messianic Jewish Commentary
by Hannah Neshar**

www.voiceforisrael.net

“And it came to pass at the end of (miketz) two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed a dream (chalom): and, hinei (behold), he stood by the river.” (Genesis 41:1)

The opening verse of this week’s parashah gives us the title, Miketz, which is a Hebrew word meaning ‘*at the end of*’. Finally, after a lengthy period of trials, Joseph was about to come to the end of his ordeal and enter into his destiny.

In last week’s study, Joseph had been persecuted by his brothers and treated unjustly by others. His brothers threw him into a pit, sold him to slave traders; his 'boss' had him thrown in prison on a false charge of raping his wife; even the chief butler of Pharaoh, for whom Joseph interpreted his dream, forgot all about him after his release.

But we see in this week’s study that it was in God's plan for Joseph to be forsaken and forgotten in prison, in order that he would be in the right place at the right time to fulfill his destiny. When we also are tempted to wonder, “*What am I doing here in this difficult place?*” we can think of Joseph and be reminded that God is at work behind the scenes, setting everything up in our favor.



Joseph and His Brethren Welcomed by Pharaoh, watercolor by James Tissot (ca. 1900).

Suddenly!

When Pharaoh dreamed a dream that none could interpret, the butler suddenly remembered the Hebrew man, Yoseph, and his uncanny ability to interpret dreams. Pharaoh called Joseph out of the prison and, after giving all glory to God, he correctly

interpreted Pharaoh's dream as a coming season of plenty, followed by a season of famine and lack. Joseph went from the prison to the palace in one day.

“Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him *quickly* out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.” (Genesis 41:14)

Did you notice that word ‘*quickly*’? Sometimes we think that an improvement in our situation is going to take time – a lot of it! And granted, sometimes things do take time to change; but we may also experience these ‘*suddenlies*’ in our lives.



Joseph Interprets the Dream of Pharaoh (19th Century painting by Jean-Adrien Guignet)

Things don't seem to be improving in the least; we don't see a thing happening; it could even be going from bad to worse. But God! **SUDDENLY!** He can bring us out better off than we could ever ask, think or imagine. It can happen in a day!

We may have been waiting for a long time to see some positive changes in our lives; it seems like it will never happen and we are tempted to give up. If we look at this story of Joseph, however, we will see that not only was God working in Joseph's heart throughout his lengthy trial, not only was God with Joseph to grant him favor, even in prison; but Joseph needed to wait until the exact right moment when Pharaoh had a disturbing dream.

Sometimes God is not waiting on us to ‘fix’ something; but he may be waiting on someone else to be fully ready. All circumstances, people, and places must line up in God's perfect order and timing for His good plan for our lives to come to pass.

In the meantime, these trials that go on and on and on... the ones that try our faith to the very uttermost limit - are the very things God is using to developing deep within us the beautiful quality of steadfast patience. We don't like to hear this but it's true.

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (James 1:2-4)

A Man of Wisdom

Joseph not only interpreted the meaning of Pharaoh's dream, he also gave practical advice on how to deal with the coming crisis. We see that Joseph is not just a 'dreamer' but also a wise, prudent and practical man. We, also, must not only be 'spiritual', hearing the voice of the Lord, but also practical people, knowing how to act upon the insights God gives us.

“So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?”
(Genesis 41:38)



Just as Pharaoh could see that God had filled Joseph with His Spirit of wisdom, so should people be able to see that as believers, we walk in wisdom from above; for the Word of God promises,

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dream (fresco circa 1816–1817 by [Peter von Cornelius](#))

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5)

“Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.” (Psalm 51:6)

Many of us lack confidence in our ability to make wise decisions. Perhaps we have made some choices that led us straight into a troublesome or even disastrous situation. If we experience enough of these ‘failures’, we can start to doubt our ability to make decisions.

We need to take hold of this promise and ask in faith for wisdom, without doubting: for doubting ourselves will cause us to become double minded and make it difficult to receive anything from the Lord.

“But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” (James 1:6-7).

Bread of Life

Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name, "*Zaphenath -Paneah*"¹ Which means 'food-man' - 'of the life'. Isn't it interesting that Yeshua also called Himself the 'bread of life'. In Hebrew, this is **לֶחֶם חַיִּים** '*Lechem-chayim*'.²

It is no coincidence that Yeshua was born in the town of Bethlehem, which is in Hebrew Beit – Lechem - the House of Bread.



A painting of Bethlehem 1882

Just as Joseph provided physical sustenance for the people, thus preventing them from perishing, Yeshua provides spiritual life, in order that all who believe in Him, as it is written, will not perish, but have everlasting life!³ It is not only physical food that we need but spiritual nourishment for our soul:

“Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”(Matthew 4:4)

Gentile Jesus or Hebrew Yeshua?

"Joseph recognized his brethren, but they did not recognize him." (Genesis 42:8)

Changing Yoseph's name to an Egyptian one helped conceal his Hebrew identity from his brothers when they came to Egypt. Yeshua's Hebrew name has also been changed to the Gentile form of '*Jesus*.' This is an important factor that effectively prevents the Jewish brethren of Yeshua from recognizing him as their Hebrew brother, Messiah, and King.

Some people become disturbed when they begin to see how Yeshua has been changed into a '*Gentile Jesus*', so foreign to his true identity as a Hebrew and a Jew. Some Christian children's videos portray this Jesus breaking bread on Passover (when yeasted bread is biblically forbidden) and instead of Pesach (Passover) it becomes '*The Easter Story*'.



¹ Genesis 41:45

² John 6:35

³ John 3:16

But we may see from this account of the life of Joseph that just as his transformation into 'an Egyptian' was in God's perfect plan Yeshua also became a 'Gentile to the Gentiles', in order to bring them salvation - ***until the time of the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*** (Romans 11:11, 25)

This small word, *until*, carries a significant meaning. God kept Joseph in prison 'until' a certain appointed time for his release. ***"He sent a man before them—Joseph—who was sold as a slave. They hurt his feet with fetters, He was laid in irons until the time that his word came to pass."*** (Psalm 105:17-19)

Similarly, when the appointed time of the fullness of the Gentiles arrives, the temporary blindness that has been placed upon the eyes of the people of Israel, the Jewish brethren of Yeshua, will be lifted, ***"And so all Israel will be saved."*** (Rom 11:15-16) Halleluyah!

Of course, no one can be one hundred percent certain of the exact time, but scripture gives us a clue – it involves Jerusalem: ***"And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."*** (Luke 21:24)

The city of Jerusalem remained under Gentile, foreign rule for around 2000 years - *until* the year 1967 when it returned into Jewish hands. Even hardened Israeli soldiers were overcome with emotion when, after a valiant battle, they reached Jerusalem's Western Wall during what is called the 'Six Day War'. They stood in awe and wept at the historic and prophetic significance of returning this last remnant of the Holy Temple into Jewish hands, after centuries of being 'trampled by Gentiles'.

IDF Paratroopers at Jerusalem's Western Wall shortly after its capture



One remaining foreign object, as a speck in the eye of Jerusalem, is the Dome of the Rock, which sits upon the location of the ancient Holy Temple. Many believe that this foreign presence sitting upon such a holy place in Jerusalem will also one day be removed and replaced by the Third Temple.



The True Identity of Yeshua Revealed

Whether or not the time of the fullness of the Gentiles has actually come, we definitely live in a time of transition. The veil is being lifted on both sides: Jewish brethren are beginning to recognize Yeshua, and Christian brethren are beginning to see 'Jesus' as the Hebrew Messiah, Yeshua.

The true identity of Yeshua is slowly but surely being revealed, just as Yoseph revealed his true identity to his brothers, by saying, ‘*Ani Yoseph*’ אֲנִי יוֹסֵף (I am Joseph), one day Yeshua will be reconciled to his brethren and say to them, ‘*Ani Yeshua*’ אֲנִי יֵשׁוּעַ, your brother and Messiah. Joseph recognized his brothers, even though they did not recognize him. The Jewish people may not recognize this ‘Jesus’; but He certainly knows them by name.

Joseph's brothers protested that they would never bow down to *their hated brother*, as his dream foretold.⁴ When Joseph was exalted to high position, after his deep suffering, all were required to bow their knee to him.

“And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, “Bow the knee!” So he set him over all the land of Egypt.”
(Genesis 41:43)



The Glory of Joseph (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Yeshua also, after his intense time of suffering betrayal, torture and death on the cross, was highly exalted to the right hand of the Father.

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.”
(Philippians 2:8-9)

God’s word promises that after a period of suffering, we too will be established: **“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Messiah, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”** (1 Peter 5:10) Therefore let us take heart even while suffering. God is at work, and the end will be glorious.

Just as Joseph’s brothers hated him, many Jewish people also hate this ‘Jesus’ as they know of him, due to centuries of persecution of Jews at the hands of so-called Christians.

⁴ Genesis 37:8

To most Jewish people, the sign of the cross is not one of divine love, but of hatred.⁵ Suffice to say that most Jews would rather die than bow their knee to this '*Jesus*' out of their loyalty to God, in the tradition of our ancestors who were martyred for their refusal to bow to a foreign god (which is mostly how Jesus is viewed by Jews at present).

But God's plan will be fulfilled, despite the protests of man. Joseph's brothers did, in the end, **"bow down to him with their faces to the earth."** (Genesis 42:6) So, too, will Yeshua's brethren one day bow down to Him: **"that at the name of Yeshua every knee should bow..."** (Phil. 2:11)

How is it possible that we, as Jewish people, can bow our knee to Yeshua? In the book of Daniel, the Son of Man, coming on the clouds of heaven, approaches the Ancient of Days. To this Messiah is given **"dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him."** (Daniel 7:14)

We are warned in Psalm 2:12 to **"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way."** One blessed day, in the fullness of time, the Jewish people will bow down to worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; but today, most Jewish people still do not recognize Yeshua as the Messiah. And yet He knows His own.

Joseph's brothers freely admitted, **"We are verily guilty concerning our brother..."** (Genesis 42:21) It must have been a terrible burden for Joseph's brothers to carry the guilt of their crime all those long years. We must unload our heavy burden our guilt, so that we may find peace and rest for our soul.



Joseph Converses with Judah, His Brother (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Just as Joseph's brothers admitted their guilt with sincere remorse and repentance, so will the Jewish people one day confess their sins and find divine forgiveness in Yeshua. One day God will pour His Spirit out upon the people of Israel and they too will grieve because of their sin towards their own Messiah.

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn." (Zech 12:10).

What was Joseph's reaction to his brothers' confession of guilt? Was he angry with them? Did he condemn them? No, he was moved to tears of compassion; he forgave them.

⁵ See Messianic Jewish View of Purim for a study of Christian Anti-Semitism: www.voiceforisrael.net

Joseph even tried to minister comfort to his brothers, assuring them that even the wrong they did was within God's plan, for the salvation of many lives.

Yeshua, like Yoseph, is willing to forgive all who come to Him with sincere remorse for our sins. **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** (1John 1:9)

It doesn't matter if we are Jewish or Gentile - Yeshua came for the lost sheep of the House of Israel, but also as the Savior of all Mankind.

In order to receive God's forgiveness and eternal salvation, you may pray the following prayer or something spontaneous out of your own heart.

*"God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I am guilty of sinning against You and against others, for which I am truly sorry. I believe that Yeshua is your Son, and that He died as the final atonement (kaparah) for all of my sins. Please forgive me and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Give me a clean heart and restore to me a right Spirit that I may serve You all the rest of my days. Lead and guide me according to Your perfect will. Thank you for my salvation and for eternal life, which I receive by faith through Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah)." Amen.*⁶

Haftarah Miketz

The prophetic portion (Haftarah) for this week's study focuses on a Biblical figure in whom, like Joseph, is also found a spirit of wisdom – King Solomon (Melech Shlomo).

In court, he is faced with an exceedingly difficult judicial situation involving two prostitutes and a baby. When Israel hears of his judgment in this case, they hold King Solomon in awe, concluding that **"He had within him Divine wisdom to do justice."** (1 Kings 3:28)

In Hebrew, this phrase is *"hochmat (wisdom) Elohim (God) la'asot (to do) mishpat (judgment)."*



Solomon and the plan for the First Temple, illustration from a Bible card published by the Providence Lithograph company.

⁶ If you prayed this prayer, please do let me know by e-mail or post so I can rejoice with you

Jewish sages believed that the two different names for God, Elohim, אֱלֹהִים and YHVH, יְהוָה each refer to different aspects of God.⁷ Elohim is the name of God used in reference to His justice; and YHVH יְהוָה is used to refer to God's loving and merciful nature.

King Solomon exemplified the kind of divine wisdom to do justice – *hochmat Elohim*. However, there is another kind of wisdom – *hotchmat (wisdom) YHVH יְהוָה (God) la'asot (to do) rachamin (mercy)* – divine wisdom to do mercy.

God of Mercy and Lovingkindness

God's lovingkindness is better than life! (Psalm 63:3)

How we need justice in this world – but oh, how we each so desperately need mercy. We can become so hard-hearted by sin, our love can grow cold, and we can temporarily forget how much we need the mercy of God.

We ask God to do justice for us and to repay those who have mistreated and taken advantage of us; but we want God to treat us with an abundance of lovingkindness and mercy. It doesn't work this way. *We receive what we give*. If we give mercy, we receive mercy; but if we give judgment, we will receive it in return. Yeshua said, **"Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy."** (Matthew 5:7)

"Judge not, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1)

Yeshua made a radical request of us in asking us to pray, not for vengeance against our enemies, but for mercy. As He prayed on the cross, *"Father forgive them for they know not what they do"*, so are we to pray as He prayed. Even in our pain and suffering, we are to forgive, as He forgave in His hour of pain.

I believe that the only reason God could use Joseph as He did to save the nation of Egypt as well as His own brethren, was because Joseph was a man of compassion and mercy. He knew how to forgive those who had hurt him; he overcame evil with good.

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21)

Joseph was neither a wimp nor a 'pushover' – he was not a 'fryer' as they call this kind of gullible, weak, easy to take advantage of person in Israel. No one wants to be a fryer, like I was when I was duped into buying a real lemon of a car in Israel. The transmission and the motor failed within the first month. The 'nice young man' who sold it to me must have laughed all the way to the bank.

⁷ Rabbi Zoe Klein, Haftarat Miketz, the Women's Haftarah Commentary

We don't like to be taken advantage of, and Yeshua is not suggesting we become doormats or idiots; but we are to forgive those who sin against us. Joseph was not a 'fryer' - he was most definitely a pragmatic man of wisdom; but he was a man who knew how to weep.⁸

We see several times when Joseph simply wept: he wept when he saw his brother Benjamin, he wept when his brothers confessed their guilt and remorse over what they had done to him, and he wept when he was reunited with his father, Jacob. Joseph was not by any means a hard-hearted man. The terrible trials he endured – the betrayals, the injustice, the abuse, the long periods of loneliness in being forgotten and abandoned in a dungeon – all of these did not serve to harden his heart but to soften it with his own tears.



Joseph weeps, Wikipedia

Will our trials, our betrayals, our injustices, our loneliness serve to harden our hearts – or to soften them by drawing us closer to the heart of God?

Yeshua was a man of sorrow, well acquainted with grief:

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” (Isaiah 53:3)

Yeshua understands us when all we can do is weep. He knew what it was to cry. He wept over Jerusalem when He could see their coming destruction and that so many refused to come under the shelter of His wings He so lovingly wanted to provide – but they were not willing.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, his soul was sorrowful even unto death. (Matthew 26:38)

Sometimes we are afraid to give in to weeping, ashamed of our tears of sorrow. We want to walk in a continual state of bliss. But it is only when we allow ourselves to feel grief that we can even begin to connect with the grief of others. Through suffering and sorrow, we can choose to become bitter and hard hearted, or we can allow the Lord to make us into merciful, compassionate human beings.

I will never forget the day I sat in the first Christian church I had ever set foot in and wept in such anguish of heart. The father of my unborn son had abandoned us – and it was Valentines Day!

⁸ Genesis 42:26, 43:30, 45:2, 45:14, 46:29

A gentle woman reached out to me and asked me the reason for my tears. After I shared my tale of woe, she replied that her husband had also left her, years earlier, with five small children. She looked me straight in the eye and said, *"You have only two choices here: you can either close your heart, becoming hard and bitter; or you can open your heart to the love of God and allow Him to heal you."*

Thank God I chose the latter, better choice; but it was largely because this woman used her sorrowful experience for good – to offer wisdom and comfort to me. Now I hope I can pass that comfort on to others who have been abandoned and feel lost, betrayed and alone. There is always hope.

This is God's intention – that we may offer comfort to those who mourn because we have known the comfort of the God of mercy.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Hamashiach, the Father of sympathy (pity and mercy) and the God who is the source of every comfort (consolation and encouragement)." (2 Corinthians 1:3)

This was my devotion the day that the fires broke out on Mt. Carmel and also the day of the terrible bus accident which killed forty young Israeli men in training to be prison guards. Sometimes we can only weep and say, *"Oh God, have mercy..."*

Lev shomea – Listening from the Heart

King Solomon asked God for one thing – wisdom. He knew that this is the principal quality that we need - more than anything else we may want.

Wisdom is **"more precious than rubies, and all the things we may desire cannot compare with her."** (Proverbs 3:15)

In the Hebrew, however, it is written that he asked for a *'lev shomea'*. He literally asked for *'a heart that hears'* (as in *'Shma Yisrael – Hear O Israel'*). So often, we make decisions out of our intellect – our human reasoning – but there is also an intuitive wisdom we may draw upon. If we are ever to know true wisdom that comes from above – heavenly wisdom – then we must develop a unique listening skill – the ability to listen from the heart.

Two women were brought to King Solomon with one baby. Each woman said that the live baby was hers and that the dead baby belonged to the other. There were no witnesses. How could Melech Shlomo judge this case with righteous judgment?

If we listen only to the facts and judge only from the standpoint of justice, then all we hear is that a terrible criminal act has been committed: one of these women has kidnapped the other woman's baby and has also committed the crime of perjury – lying in court under oath.

But if we listen from the heart – if we have a ‘*lev shomea*’ – then we can hear another voice. We hear the voice of loneliness and desperation. These two women are prostitutes. Men come and go, take what they came for, pay a few shekels, and leave.

Most likely these two women experience little if any caring or true affection in their lives. The woman says, “we were *together*” and “*there was no one else with us in the house*” and again, “*no one except the two of us in the house.*” (1 Kings 3:18)



Fresco of the Judgment of Solomon

Can we hear from our heart that these two women, except for one another, were alone in the world? No father to attend the birth; no midwife, no family member present to welcome these little ones into the world. How very different from the loving embraces of family who welcomed my children and grandchildren into the world.

These women were alone, without hope, without love – except for this one tiny ray of light that had come into their lives through a little child – someone to cuddle, to nurse at their breast, to look into their eyes and smile with a smitten love reserved for infants and mothers.

Finally, there would be someone in their lives to give a pure love, untainted by lust and corruption – finally a bed companion that will not hurt or abandon. But suddenly this spark of hope is snuffed out – smothered into oblivion – when one of the infants stops breathing.

Can we understand when we listen with our hearts, the desperation of the woman who crept over and ever so quietly exchanged her dead baby for the living one?

King Solomon heard the case and proposed a just solution – cut the baby in half and give a half to each of the women. Here came a man, not with love, but with brutality – much as these women, as harlots, have likely known in their experiences with men. Nineteenth century engraving by [Gustave Doré](#)



But Solomon is using this means to determine who is the real mother. He is not so much after who the biological mother is, but who is the ‘real mother’, for a real mother is the one who has compassion.

All mothers carry their infants in their womb for nine months; but a real mother is one who carries the child all their lives with compassion. The Hebrew word for mercy is rachamim רַחֲמִים – a word that stems from another word - ‘rechem’ רֶחֶם - the Hebrew word for ‘womb’.

Each biological mother carries a child in her ‘rechem’; but a true mother has ‘rachamin’ for her child until the day she dies.

This is why abortion is such a grave sin – because the woman’s womb (rechem) was created by God to be a place of mercy (rachamim) to her yet unborn child. And instead, through abortion, it becomes a brutal, dangerous place for a helpless, developing infant.

And yet, even towards those who have experienced the pain and guilt of abortion (of which I am the chief sinner)⁹, we need to have hatred for the sin, but love, mercy and compassion for the sinner. May God grant grace, strength, and wisdom to all those laboring in the harvest fields of pro-life ministries in Israel and in the nations around the world.

We need both justice and mercy to walk in true wisdom; only God knows how to keep these and administer each in perfect balance. Often we fail by falling into the ditch on either side. But I believe that our sin nature tends to gravitate more easily towards justice; which is why Yeshua emphasized the need for mercy.

He showed us the way of the cross; and as His followers we need to pick it up daily and follow Him, showing mercy to those who may not necessarily deserve it.

One morning, I so wanted to administer justice towards my daughter, who was rude and disrespectful when she left for school in the morning. Not only that, but she left her room a total mess! I thought with my mind, *“This has got to stop. She should honor and respect me as her mother. She should keep her room neat and tidy already at her age. She should....she should....”* The list went on and on. I was so angry I only wanted to think of a just punishment.

So I posed a sign, much to that effect on her door and left it at that. Later in the day, however, I came to understand better, by listening with my heart, how difficult it must be for a 12 year old girl to wake up at 5:45 A.M. to get dressed quickly, not able to find anything that matches, and rush out the door to catch an early bus to school, dreading the hour long, winding bus ride that makes her feel sick, fearful of making the necessary

⁹ Read Hannah’s personal testimony in her book, Hannah, Grafted in Again, or watch the DVD, Because He lives. Order through website www.voiceforisrael.net or by mail

transfer at the busy Central Bus Station in Jerusalem. It has not been that long ago that a bomb went off at that exact location. She is afraid to be young and alone.

Now, with my heart engaged, I did not condone her attitude, but I could understand. I changed the sign on her door from one of justice to that of mercy. I wrote, *“I appreciate you being diligent to get up so early in the morning to get to school on time and I know it is not always easy to take the bus to Jerusalem. I admire your courage and determination, and I love you.”*

I made her bed and quietly closed the door. My heart was once more at rest.

Law and justice came through Moses but mercy and grace through Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah). **“because while the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Yeshua the Messiah.”** (John 1:17)

May we each ask God and receive, not only ‘*hochmat Elohim*’ - wisdom to do justice, but also ‘*hochmat YHVH יהוה*’ - wisdom to do mercy - by listening with our heart and not just our head.

Shabbat Chanukah Special Haftarah (Zechariah 2:14-4:7)

Miketz also includes a special prophetic reading for the Feast of Dedication this year, since it coincides with the time of the festival, also called Chanukah or the Festival of Lights. It is during this time of year when the winter nights are the longest that we sense our need for the light more intently.

Some people even experience what has been termed S.A.D (Seasonal Affective Disorder) – a particular depression brought about by a deficiency of sunlight. Likewise, when we are going through our ‘long, dark night of the soul’, we feel more intensely our desire to see even a glimmer of light.

Joseph, in this portion of Scripture, was brought out of the darkness of an Egyptian dungeon to interpret the strange dreams of the Pharaoh. In one day, Joseph was promoted from prison to palace; his life was transformed suddenly from darkness to light.



Photo by Liat Nesher

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah, wrote of a 'Great Light' which would one day come to lift people out of the gloomy darkness: **"Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed ... The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined."** (Isaiah 9:1-2)

Who is this '*great light*' of which Isaiah prophesied? The Light would come in the form of a child, a son who would be destined to carry the very names of the Almighty God and eventually to rule the nations in righteousness and justice, seated on the throne of His father, David, for all eternity.

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice, from that time forward, even forever." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah) said, **"I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."** (John 8:12)

Chanukah is a celebration of light. This joyous festival commemorated the salvation of the Jewish people from the oppression of the Greeks. It was both a physical salvation and a spiritual one, since the Jews were not only rescued from persecution; but also liberated from an enforced Hellenistic religion. They fought for freedom to worship the one true God and keep His commandments as written in the Torah.



Did Yeshua celebrate Chanukah? As a Jew, he likely kept the festival. Yeshua is mentioned in the gospel of John, as walking in the courts of the Temple during Chanukah: **"Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch."** (John 10:22-23)

Chanukah is the anniversary of the re-dedication of the Temple after its defilement by the Greco-Syrian armies. By all rights, it should have been a clear-cut defeat for the Jews; they were completely outnumbered. But God.....

This is the lesson of all Jewish history and it can become our history as well if we will allow God's spirit to have free reign in our lives, rather than relying upon our own abilities. For with man these things may be impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Chanukah was not simply a battle between the Greek-Syrian military forces and the small band of Jewish freedom fighters called the Macabbees; it was a deeper spiritual battle, still going on today, between a true Biblical faith and the powerful forces that attempt to lure God's people into paganism.

'Chanukah' חנוכה is related to the Hebrew word hinukh which means education, derived from the root – h-n-kh – חנך – to dedicate; therefore Chanukah is also known as the Feast of Dedication.

Once Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, anointing it and consecrating it and all its furnishings, it came time to offer up the 'dedication offering' (chanukat hamizbeach) for the altar, thus the altar was dedicated unto the Lord.

“When Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed and consecrated it and all its furnishings. He also anointed and consecrated the altar and all its utensils.”
(Numbers 7:1)

We may complete a work or project; it may be anointed and beautiful – but it is only when we have truly dedicated it to Adonai that our true education may begin.

Although we live in this world, our ultimate allegiance is to God and His Torah. We can re-dedicate ourselves at this season of Chanukah - and may our true education begin!

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach (Happy holiday)

About the Author:

Hannah Nesher grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, bringing the Word of God from Zion to the nations.

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