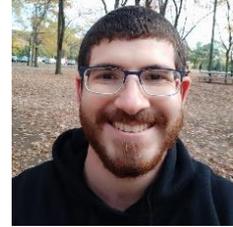


Seeing the light in the way

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Our parasha is one of the most interesting parashot in the torah. The parasha starts and finishes in the middle of a story, it doesn't open the story of Joseph and his brothers and it doesn't finish it. Most of the parashot in the torah are a closed subject, and if not, they open a subject or close it. For this reason, parashat Miketz is so special.

Our parasha starts with Joseph in jail after his brothers sold him in the last parasha. At night, Pharaoh has a dream and with Joseph's belief and wisdom, he becomes the second to Pharaoh only, the ruler of the whole of Egypt. The parasha continues with Joseph's brothers coming to Egypt wanting to buy food. Joseph recognizes his brothers while they don't recognize him and accuses them of being spies. The brothers explain that they are all brothers and they have an old father and a young brother in the land of Canaan. After hearing of that, Joseph warns them to return to Egypt only if they have their younger brother. After a long negotiation, Jacob agrees to let Binyamin go, but only if Judah will vouch for his safe return. The brothers return to Egypt, and after Joseph treats them in the best way, he lets them return home, but not before planning their downfall. When the brothers leave to return home for the second time, Joseph accuses them of stealing his goblet, which he put in Binyamin's bag, and takes Binyamin as a slave. In the next parasha we get to the climax of the story, with Joseph telling his brothers who he really is. In our parasha, on the other hand, the story stops in the middle of the drama; Binyamin, who Jacob cared so much for, was taken for slavery. In my opinion it is not by chance that the parasha ends at this dramatic point. Before we understand the reason, I would like to note the timing of our parasha.

Every year, parashat Miketz is read around Hanukah, whether it's during Hanukah or whether it's a week later. Hanukah too is a symbol of a midpoint. Hanukah is the first holiday which isn't part of the bible (Purim which occurs before Hanukah is one of the last stories in the bible). Hanukah is deep in the time of the second temple, a period of time in which there are no more prophecies, and for that reason this holiday is distinct from the rest of the holidays. On the other hand, this holiday surrounds the temple, and from that aspect it is very similar to the rest of the holidays written in the Torah. Other holidays which the sages gave us have nothing to do with the temple, because they were decided upon only after the temple was destroyed. In Hanukah the temple was the whole basis of the rebellion and the miracle of the candle lighting happened in the temple.

Additionally, Hanukah is the only holiday surrounding the temple that occurs in the winter. The three pilgrimage festivals and the high holidays occur between spring and autumn. Why is Hanukah different?

As we saw, Hanukah is the holiday of 'the middle of the way'. It's not entirely

like the rest of the holidays from the Torah and it's not entirely like the holidays from our sages. Hanukah happens in the dark while the rest of the holidays occur in the light, Hanukah is the only holiday in which all of its commands occur at night, at dark. Hanukah is the holiday of exile, while still being in Israel.

In other words, Hanukah is the holiday of the journey; Am Yisrael was walking the path towards the inevitable exile, but they were still in Israel (de facto, the exile has begun as we no longer enjoyed national independence). Hanukah is one of the holidays fixed by our sages, but it surrounds the temple. Hanukah is the only holiday which occurs at winter, while it's dark, rainy and cold. But Israel, despite all that, light the candles, they push away the darkness. Hanukah symbols seeing the light and the good even while being on the path, even when forgetting the beginning and not yet seeing the end, even in the middle we must light the inner light in our souls.

In this way, parashat Miketz symbolizes this same point, even in a huge crisis, with Joseph's brothers being in their lowest point, they don't remember where they started and they don't see the light of the end in which Joseph tells them who he is. Even in this hard place, which is so hard mentally, they must remember that there still is a light.

I hope we deserve seeing the light in the darkness, in the middle of the way, without the hope of the beginning or the hope of the end, in the despair that crawls in sometimes, even there, there is a light.

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