



Parshat Miketz/Last night of Chanukkah - Igniting Hope

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It is no coincidence that Chanukkah falls during the darkest days of the year. Only this week do the days begin to get longer again, longer each day, as we add more light to our *Chanukiyot* (Chanukkah Menorahs). Light, after all, symbolizes hope.

In the Mishkan (traveling Tabernacle) and in the *Beit HaMikdash* (Holy Temple), we had a Menorah. The Menorah stood tall and was a shining light to the people. It gave us hope and symbolized our *spiritual* growth. The illumination of the Menorah served as a beacon for the entire Jewish people. The symbol of the state of Israel is a Menorah with olive leaves surrounding it. Our “hope” is for peace.

In Warsaw, Poland, in the cemetery, graves are adorned with pictures that allow you to know more about the person who is buried there. There are stones with *Tzedakah* boxes (symbolizing a person who helped to support the community), stones with hands forming the blessing of the *Kohanim* (symbolizing a grave belonging to a Kohen), stones with books (symbolizing that a scholar is buried there), and stones with broken candle sticks (symbolizing the lost hope of a young mother/wife).

All that is left of the extermination camp Treblinka are stone monuments. Each monument depicts a town/village/city that was annihilated as the Jewish inhabitants went to die at Treblinka. In the middle of the field of stones stands one tall monument. As you walk towards the monument, your eyes are drawn to the depiction of a cracked Menorah. During the Shoah (Holocaust) hope was lost, our candles extinguished.

In the Jewish quarter of Krakow, Poland (known as Kazmiercz), stood the Spira Shul. This shul became known as the Candle Shul, for as long as the townspeople saw lit candles in the window of the second story, they knew that the Rabbi was alive and was studying our ancient texts and that all must be well in their world. The night that the candles were not flickering was the night that the Rabbi had died and so too the hope of the townspeople.

During our darkest days and nights, we must not lose our hope. We often need a spark to re-awaken us - to remind us of our purpose.

Light has the potential to give life – not only physically but spiritually.

In this week's Parsha, *Miketz*, we learn about Joseph finding himself in a pit for a second time (the first time was in last week's Parsha, when his brothers threw him into one before selling him to a band of Ishmaelites. This week, he is in a jail in Egypt). The visually imagery of being thrown into a pit alludes not only to a physical darkness but emotional despair.

In Cleveland, we have many days that are grey and gloomy. Our attitude is different on those days than on the beautiful sunny days. On gloomy days, we too are gloomy. Light has a way of changing mood.

As Joseph found himself in the pit, he undoubtedly struggled with his emotions, wondering if he would ever see the light again – **hoping** to get out of the darkness.

Chanukkah gives us that same ability. On Chanukkah, we add a light each night. We add hope. Just like the Menorah in the Holy Temple, not only do we hope for survival, but for spiritual enlightenment. We hope that the light that Joseph finally saw when he was taken from the pit is the light that we are able to see – the light of freedom and redemption.

Each of us has the ability to light a spark in another person. We must use the light of inspiration and view ourselves as the *Shamash* (the helper candle). We must illuminate places where there is darkness, whether physical or spiritual. As a spark ignites each of us, we must spread the fire to another.

AS A FAMILY:

- What symbol best describes your life.
- Dedicate the last night of Chanukkah (after-all the word Chanukkah means dedication) to learn about this week's Torah portion. Knowledge is light (out of the Dark Ages came the Enlightenment).

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS WEEK'S PARSHA, TRY TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

1. What were each of Pharaoh's dreams?
2. What did the dreams represent?
3. Who interpreted the dreams?
How were they rewarded?
How did their name change?
4. What is Joseph's plan?
5. Why did Yaakov send his son's to Egypt?
6. How does Joseph treat his brothers?

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Urim Samaech (Have a wonderful Chanukkah)