

Miketz: Shabbat Chanukah: Getting and Giving

- Submitted by Nisson Shulman.

The key to Joseph's character and story is that he is sent to help and to give life in time of famine. Happy of they who learn this lesson, that Hashem provides gifts in order to give to others. The difference in the water of the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea though the source is the same, Mount Hermon, is that the Sea of Galilee has an outlet for its water, giving millions of gallons to irrigate Israel's soil.

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(Unknown authorship)

This Shabbat we continue the dramatic story of Joseph. The Torah devotes many passages to his wisdom and kindness. It gives a detailed description of his dealings with the great and the lowly, as well as with members of his own family.

Here is a man brought out of the dungeon to become the viceroy of Egypt to whom the brothers who had wronged him must come for help. He is in a position to wreak vengeance and to deal harshly with them, but acts kindly instead. He believes firmly that everything that happened to him was in accordance with a divine plan. "For God sent me here that I may help to preserve your lives in these days of famine" (Gen. 45:5). These are the words of solace he offers his astounded brothers when he reveals his identity.

They act as the key to the character of Joseph. He believed that God provides gifts to man so that he may share them with others. That is at once man's greatest responsibility as well as his opportunity to lead a spiritually and morally triumphant existence.

There are two great lakes in Israel, called seas. One is the Sea of Galilee, and the other the Dead Sea. Both get their waters from the same source, from Mount Hermon, but what a difference there is between them! The Sea of Galilee is a lovely body of water, abounding with living things. The Dead Sea is a brackish pool in which no living thing can thrive.

Why is this so? The Sea of Galilee has an outlet for its waters. It gives millions of gallons to fructify the neighbouring soil. It gets water and it gives to others. It is therefore always sparkling and pure. The Dead Sea, however, keeps all the water for itself. It gets to keep. True, through the years it has become rich in minerals, but it is incapable of sustaining life. It is as dead as the name it bears.

Blessed are the Josephs whose lives are symbolized by the Sea of Galilee, the men and women who consider themselves the custodians rather than outright owners of the bounties of God. Blessed are they who get, and give from what they get. They are the promoters of the health and happiness of their fellow men. Unhappy are they, who, like the Dead Sea, get to keep, to grab and hoard and hold everything for themselves. For like the bleak waters of that salt lake, they ultimately become victims of their self-imposed isolation, unfit to live with, shunned and despised by all.

Light is only light when it shines out upon others. On this day of Shabbat Chanukah, the Feast of Lights, let us resolve all of us to be lights; to use our influence in a positive manner; and we too will be blessed with light, not only for ourselves but for all our people, the light of Geulah Shelema venomar amen.

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