



5778 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Miketz / פרשת מקץ

The Flame of Hope

One of the unique characteristics of Parshat Mikeitz is the lack of direct prophecy. For most of Sefer Bereishit we have encountered Hashem speaking directly with human beings to command them, bless them, teach them or rebuke them. However, in this week's parsha, Hashem's voice does not appear. Rashi explains that despite the fact that Yaakov was worthy of prophecy, his sadness over Yosef's "death" prevented him from receiving the word of Hashem.¹

However, despite the lack of direct prophecy, Rashi notes that Yaakov still merited some form of divine intuition. The Torah describes that Yaakov "saw that there was grain (*shever*) being sold in Egypt" and then sent his sons to buy grain there during the famine. Commenting on the anomalous word for grain that is used (*shever*), Rashi writes:²

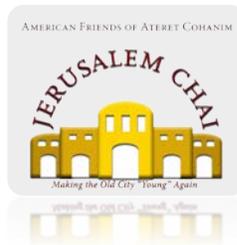
What then is the meaning of "saw"? He saw with the divine "mirror" that he still had hope (שְׁכָר) in Egypt, but it was not a real prophecy to explicitly inform him that this was Yosef.

In addition to "grain," the word *shever*, also means "hope." Despite Yaakov's constant mourning over his lost son, he never lost his divinely inspired hope in the future. Perhaps it was this sense of underlying optimism against all odds that caused Hashem to allow him to "see" the "hope" in Egypt and reunite him with his beloved son.

The notion of never losing hope in a dark, post-prophetic world is one of the themes of Chanukah. Our holiday commemorates events that occurred centuries after the last prophet and a century and a half into Greek sovereignty over the Land of Israel. With a loss of direct communication with Hashem and sovereignty, the future of the Jewish people might have appeared to

¹Rashi to 45:27.

² Bereishit 42:1.



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be bleak. What rational argument could there have been for the continued relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people?

However, despite the uncertainty there were those who were graced with divine intuition and strong faith. They fought against the tide, expressing great confidence in Hashem despite the silencing of prophecy and open miracles. Ultimately, Hashem rewarded them with the miracle of Chanukah – not yet a direct communication, but a miracle of a small flame remaining well past its predicted time of extinguishment. This flame very clearly sent a message to the Jewish people from Hashem that even bereft of prophecy and direct communication, He is still watching over us. The Chanukah candles give us *shever* – hope – for the future despite the surrounding darkness and silence.

This same theme is apparent in our modern return to Zion. For two millennium Jews prayed to return to a rebuilt Yerushalayim and they were answered with silence and persecution. In the dark years of exile there was little rational reason for Jews to keep Yerushalayim alive in their hearts.

And then, the miraculous occurred. Yerushalayim is now a thriving Jewish city and the capital of a modern Jewish state. Similar to the Chashmona'im, the hopes and dreams of all of those Jews who waited for Yerushalayim in the darkness of exile were at least partially fulfilled by Hashem. And similar to the menorah, we must use our return to Yerushalayim as a sign for a hopeful (*shever*) future. Just as Hashem, despite his concealment, has brought us thus far, He will soon bring about the ultimate and complete redemption.