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**A Parsha Weekly by the Friedman Kollel  
of Metropolitan Washington**

**Parshas Mikeitz**  
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## **The End of Darkness**

**By Rabbi Eliezer Lachman, Rosh HaKollel**

The term "Mikeitz" refers to the end of a defined period. This week's parsha is called "Mikeitz" because it begins by stating that the events that it tells about, which include Yosef's release from prison, took place "mikeitz," at the end of, a two year period. Midrash Rabbah illustrates this verse by citing Iyov 28:3: Keitz sam lachoshech, God sets an end to darkness. Yosef's time in prison was an example of being in darkness, explains the Midrash, and God set a predetermined limit for how long it would last.

The Midrash does not explain why Yosef's stay in prison is considered an example of "darkness." Perhaps the term darkness is used metaphorically, to denote the state of being unfree; it is also possible that since the prison was a pit (see 41:14), it was literally a dark place. Zohar, however, connects the concept of darkness to the previous verse: "And the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers did not remember Yosef and he forgot him." Zohar points out that the term "and he forgot him" is apparently superfluous, and therefore interprets it as referring to Yosef becoming "forgotten," as it were, by God. The deepest state of darkness is when one feels abandoned and "forgotten" by God. Indeed, in Hebrew the words for darkness and forgetting (choshech and shochach) are composed of the same letters (ches, shin and chof).

This discussion is also relevant to the time of Chanukah that we are now commemorating. The pre-Chanukah period, when the Greek Empire ruled the Jewish people, is considered by the Midrash a time of "darkness" (Midrash Rabbah, Bereishis 2:4 and 44:17), for the aim of the Greek persecution was to make the Jews forget Torah (see Al Hanisim prayer) and the entire concept of being in a relationship with God (Midrash Rabbah ad loc). Chanukah is, then, an end to the darkness, and indeed the mitzvah of Chanukah is to light candles, symbolizing the light that we as Jews bring to the world. This light grows out of the relationship we have with

God: we take care to fulfill mitzvos in the highest, most "pure" manner, and God reciprocates by enabling us to accomplish more (to have our "light" last longer) than would be thought possible. Neither partner in this man-God relationship has forgotten the other, and this creates the light.

God also set an end, a predetermined limit, to the period of "darkness" of Greek control, for the date of the start of Chanukah, the twenty-fifth of Kislev, was predestined from the time of the Tabernacle (see Pesikta Rabbasi ch. 5). Although it is true that the Jews under Mattisyahu rebelled of their own accord, the time that they ultimately succeeded in expelling the Greeks and rededicating the Temple was set by Divine Providence, just as the time that Yosef left prison was set by God's plan.

Chanukah is an "end to the darkness" in yet another way: It falls out at the time in which the days are shortest and the nights are longest, and marks the time in which the days start getting longer again. (Chanukah falls out exactly three months after the anniversary of Creation, when day and night were exactly equal, and thus serves as the lunar calendar's approximation of the winter solstice.) The twenty-fifth of Kislev was predestined by God to be "an end to the darkness" of Greek persecution, just as it was set by God to be an end to increasing physical darkness (see Maharal, Ner Mitzvah pg. 23-24).

This lesson is relevant to each of us personally. People do not live static lives; there are always ups and downs, times of "light" and times of "darkness." Sometimes the darkness can be very deep and we might feel abandoned by God, but always "God sets an end to darkness." Every darkness has an end by Divine fiat, and is followed by a period of light. It is up to us to remain faithful to Him during the times of darkness, and to try to find the light and not, God forbid, push it away.

## About the Friedman Kollel

The Rabbi Samuel and Zehava Friedman Kollel, located in Olney, Maryland, offers learning opportunities for Jews of all backgrounds. These include one-on-one chavrusas, public lectures and classes for men and women, as well as after-school structured learning for public school teens. The Kollel operates under the leadership of Rabbi Eliezer Lachman and Rabbi Shaya Milikowsky. For more information or to sponsor an upcoming Capital Torah, please contact Rabbi Elyakim Milikowsky at [FriedmanKollel@BetterFamily.org](mailto:FriedmanKollel@BetterFamily.org).

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