



## Miketz – Chanukah: The Nation Sparks

Reflections for the Chanukah after the Petirah of the Godol HaDor  
Maran HaRav Ahron Yehuda Leib Shteinman ZT"ל

### "Sparks"

An interesting phenomenon repeats itself no less than four times in this week's Parsha. Ever since the Shevatim sold Yosef, Yaakov Avinu is stripped of prophecy. However, in this week's Parsha prophecy makes a gradual comeback in the form of "Sparks of Prophecy". The first time is (42:1) "And Yaakov saw that there is food to buy in Egypt..." says Rashi: "how did he see? He did not see, rather he heard! As he tells the brothers 'I have heard that there's food to buy in Egypt' so what does it mean that he 'saw'? He saw in a 'holy prism' that he has a 'fragment' ("Shever") in mitzrayim, this was not real prophecy, for he was not told specifically that this is Yosef". The second time is when the brothers tell Yosef "...we are all the children one man..." (42:11) Says Rashi: "a Holy Spirit sparked in them and they included him (Yosef) with them that he (Yosef) is also the son of their father". The third time is when Yehuda argues with Yaakov to allow them to go down to Egypt with Binyamin: "...let us go and we will live..." (43:8) says Rashi: the holy spirit sparked in him and he was (unconsciously) saying that through going to Egypt your spirit will be revived as it says (in next week's Parsha) 'Yaakov's Spirit was revived' (meaning to say his prophecy was fully restored by the good news that Yosef is still alive)...". The fourth time is when Yaakov bids them farewell and prays for them and says God will put give you Mercy before the

man and he will send to you your brother the other..." (43:14) says Rashi: "your brother" - refers to Shimon. "The other" - Holy Spirit was 'thrown in him' to include Yosef. Asides from defining explaining this phenomenon, there are two observations to point out and Ponder: Firstly, this 'sparking of Ruach hakodesh' is not just happening to Yaakov Avinu who was the prophet of the generation, it's happening to the brothers also! Secondly, there is a common theme in these four instances: being reunited with Yosef! Is that a coincidence or is that integral to this experience of 'sparking of Ruach hakodesh' that all of them were experiencing?

### One metaphor - two applications with a common root

The Rambam in his letter to Yemenite Jewry gives a metaphor to explain the difference between our Torah and all the other religions. He likens all the other religions to a statue that looks like a human being positioned right next to a real human being. From afar they both look like people. Only from up close can you see that one is dead stone the other one is a living breathing human being with a mind and Heart full of intellect and depth of emotion. So also, from afar all religions seemingly are the same. They all talk about ethics, morality, and serving the Creator. But when you get up close you could see that the Torah has infinite inner meaning whereas the other religions

just have their superficial ethics with no inner content. Interestingly enough, the Kuzari uses the exact same metaphor to describe the difference between the Jewish people and all the nations. He says that all other nations look like a ‘living nation’ the way a statue resembles a living human being. Only the Jewish people are a ‘Living Nation’ with a real Divine spirit that permeates them, making them the eternal living Nation. These metaphors are identical but with two different applications, or maybe not?

### **Jewish People and Torah – Body and Soul**

The second Rashi in Chumash says “Bereishis” means for the sake of the first. ‘First’ refers to the Jewish people and ‘First’ refers to the Torah. How can there be two ‘Firsts’? The Nefesh HaChaim explains that the Jewish people and the Torah have a common Heavenly root. The Jewish soul is a manifestation of Torah. He explains that’s why the Halacha is worded: “...if a person is in the room when a Jew dies he must rent his garments as if witnessing **a sefer Torah being burnt**”. “Torah was Commanded to us by Moshe as an inheritance of the Assembly of Yaakov” (Devarim 33:4) Torah is called **“inheritance of the Jewish people”**, it’s not something that we learn, it belongs to us like our soul. Rav Saadia Gaon said: “Our nation is a nation only by virtue of the Torah”. The Torah is our ‘national spirit’ that binds us together as a “living nation”. The Jewish people are the only **“living nation”** that has a **‘Divine soul’**, The Torah that other nations don’t have. Therefore Am Yisroel will live forever! The Rambam and the Kuzari are actually speaking about the same thing: **The living Torah with all its infinite depth is the living soul of the Jewish people.**

### **Finding answers within**

This Unique Reality makes it possible for the Jewish people to actually generate Torah at times of crisis. The Gemara relates that Hillel

forgot the procedure for transporting the shechita knife when erev Pessach comes out on Shabbos. He told his colleagues to “leave it up to the Jewish people, for if they are not prophets, they are the children of prophets” meaning to say that they will figure out the correct procedure. This has been the miracle of the survival of the Jewish people and the survival of Torah. The Jewish people will live forever because their “National spirit” is none other than the eternal Torah itself! It is also the secret of the survival of Torah itself. Even though we’ve been in a state of crisis for thousands of years, not having neither prophets nor a Sanhedrin to lead us we’ve always managed to produce leaders and to figure things out. **These are the “Sparks of Prophecy” referenced in this week’s Parsha!** Even if we are stripped of Prophecy we still have “Sparks of Prophecy”, **because the Torah is our national spirit!** This is why **Yaakov and his children** experience the “Sparks of Prophecy” it comes from **the power of Torah residing in the Jewish Collective**. That’s why the “Sparks of Prophecy” all revolve around becoming reunited with Yosef and healing the fragmented Jewish Collective. Only the Jewish Collective is a big enough vessel to hold the Torah, **thus the “sparks” and Jewish unity are inextricably bound up with each other!**

### **Purim vs Chanukah**

The Gemara says that the chapter in Tehillim “Laminatzeach al **Ayelet Hashachar**” – a hymn on the crack of dawn- refers to the miracle of Purim. Just like **“Ayelet Hashachar”** (crack of dawn) is the end of the night so also Purim was the last of the Miracles. The Gemara asks: but there is still Chanukah (that happened later in history)? The Gemara answers: Purim was the last miracle that was to be put down in writing (as per the megillah). Purim ended an era! It was the final miracle of an era when

prophets walked the earth and guided us with clear directives from Hashem. Esther was a prophetess and Chagai, Zecharia, and Malachi where around at the time. That's why the story of Purim got into the Tanach as do all prophecies that are relevant for all generations. Not too long afterwards, we no longer had Prophets. Lacking the light of Prophecy, it seemed like there was no hope for any type of divine revelation to outdo and defeat Greek culture. Then came Chanukah.....

### **Awakening the National spirit**

The story of Chanukah happens during the era of the "Zugos", sometime in between the leadership of Yossi ben Yoezer & Yossi ben Yochanan and Yehoshua Ben Parchia & Nitay Ha'Arbeli and yet we don't find that these Sages where the leaders of the revolt. Matisyahu and his sons are not mentioned as the great Torah Scholars and carriers of the tradition in the Rambam's 40 Generations from Moshe Rabbeinu until Ravina and Rav Ashi. The leading Torah scholars followed Matisyahu and his children but were not the leaders of the revolt. The power of Matisyahu and his children derived from the fact that they were kohanim and that they sought to unite the people and reestablish the Jewish Kingdom. **They tapped into the "power of the people".** The whole Jewish people are called "**Mamleches Kohanim**" - a kingdom of priests and that's the power that they awakened! The Secret of that remaining jug of oil that was untouched and undefiled which was stamped by the Kohen Gadol represents the entire Jewish Collective. When the Kohen Gadol goes into the 'Kodesh hakodashim' and does all of the Kippur service his is doing so in the name of the entire Jewish People and hence is entitled to say the "Viduy" on their behalf. That last jug of oil represented the "**spark of Ruach Hakodesh**" of the Jewish Collective spirit that

never gets extinguished! **From that spark everything can regenerate.**

### **Ayelet Hashachar**

This Chanukah comes on the heels of the tragic passing of the leader of our generation MaRan HaRav Ahron Leib Shteinman ZT"ל, who by no coincidence wrote a series of seforim "**Ayelet Hashachar**" (crack of dawn). Like the "**Ayelet Hashachar**", his passing marks the end of an era of Torah leaders from a time long gone. He left us in darkness with no leader to guide us. But then came Chanukah to remind us that the Torah does not reside in individuals - it is the life force and soul of Kehillas Yaakov and it is time for us to do like in those days. The Jewish people have to **close ranks of all the divisions of Torah true Jewry** (malchus), get serious about **learning and divine service** (Kohanim v'goy kadosh), and spark up those Sparks of "**Mamleches Kohanim**" to ignite the Flame of Jewish Renaissance and bring forth the light of the Geula Hashleima, Amen!

Good Shabbos.



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