

Dear haverim,

As we light both the Hanukkah and Shabbat candles this evening, I share with you this thought.

We read Parsha Miketz every year on the Shabbat during Hanukkah. The parsha focuses on Joseph and his rise to power in Egypt. There is a strong connection between Joseph and Hanukkah. Unlike the Exodus from Egypt where God's presence is clearly felt and mentioned time and time again, there is no obvious Divine intervention in Joseph's life or in the story of Hanukkah. Just as Joseph's success can be attributed to his wisdom and talent, so to the Maccabean victories can be understood as the result of great military leadership and perseverance. Perhaps that is why the rabbis chose to emphasize the miracle of the oil, as a way to highlight the miraculous nature of the victory and to make us aware of God's hidden role. Just like the story of Joseph, it would seem that seeing the miracles of Hanukkah does not depend on our ability to physically see them, but rather on our willingness to open our hearts.

There were no overt miracles performed for Joseph, but he was able to recognize God's presence in every part of his life. He was able to understand that his success in life and rise to power in Egypt was a hidden miracle from God.

So to our rabbis understood the hidden miracles of Hanukkah. It would be easy to ignore God's presence in Hanukkah, but the rabbis understood that God performed hidden miracles in order for the Maccabees to win the war and to enable the oil to last for eight days.

Many of us do not take the time to reflect on the miracles in our life. We do not reflect on our success and acknowledge God for helping us along the way. We often attribute everything in life to luck and our own personal success, but we must recognize God's hidden presence. Maybe God does not perform overt miracles in our time, but there is no question that God continues to work through hidden miracles. The release of Alan Gross on the first day of Hanukkah may be just one of those hidden miracles.

Joseph and Hanukkah are some highlights of God's earliest hidden miracles. As we enter Shabbat with both sets of candles burning, I urge each of us to reflect on the hidden miracles that are part of our lives and celebrate the way in which God is present in each of our lives.

Hag Urim Sameach and Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Michael Kushnick