

Dear Chavraya,

In all of the ways that we prepare for Shabbos each week is a reminder that preparation is also needed to bring the day that is all Shabbos, when Shabbat shalom will reign not for one day, but for all days. So will come an end to historical time as we know it. That time of swords turned into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks is called *keytz hayamim/the end of days*. There is a link, both grammatical and symbolic to the name of this week's Torah portion, *parashat Mikeitz, Vayehi mikeytz shnatayim yamim/It came to pass at the end of two full years*, referring to the time of Yosef's liberation from Pharaoh's prison.

In the glow of the Chanukkah candles, as we read *Parashat Mikeitz*, there is a beautiful link between these opening words of the Torah portion and *keytz hayamim/the end of days*. As Yosef is freed from prison, we look to that time when humanity shall be freed from enslavement to war and violence. Illuminating the way of hope, the rabbis find deeper meaning in the word *keytz/end* by drawing on a verse in the Book of Job, *Keytz sam l'choshech/He puts an end to darkness*. In Job, this verse is about miners who go down into the mine with a candle to illumine the darkness. The rabbis spiritualized the verse, saying it refers to God, Who will put an end to the darkness of evil in the world. The Gerer Rebbe, the *S'fas Emes*, speaks of the light of holiness that is in the world, but which is encrusted in *k'lipot/shells* and is waiting to be raised up through human deeds of righteousness. It is our job to free these sparks of light, just as Yosef was freed from the darkness of his prison.

This is the gentle message of the Chanukkah candles, reminding us of the encrusted light of holiness that needs to be freed and raised up in the world. In the *haftarah* from the Prophet Zecharia, which the rabbis chose for the Shabbos of Chanukkah, we are taught how to prepare for that time of great light, the day that is all Shabbos, *Lo v'chayil v'lo v'cho'ach/Not by might, nor by power, but by God's spirit*.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor