

A Shamash Light to the Nations

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As Hanukkah draws to a close, the candles are burning out and the last of the latkes are being eaten. However, as sad as it is to see holidays like this go away, we must see these holidays as reminders of how we ought to be all year. Hanukkah is a renewing of the oil of the Ruach Ha Kodesh within us, so the light of the shamash can continue to burn in our hearts long after it is extinguished from our menorahs. Yosef is a perfect example to us of what it is to have God's Shamash light burning within us, even when immersed in a dark pagan culture. Such light was seen by others around him, including Pharaoh himself. What was the nature of this light? What do we do to shine forth this light in our own lives?

The shamash light starts with an intimate relationship with God. God's first command recorded in Scripture is "Let there be light"; and there was light. Without a sun, moon, or stars, the only possible source of this light was God Himself. At this command, God separated the world of evil, which is darkness, and ruled by Ha Satan, from the world of holiness, which is light, and ruled by the Almighty God. From this point on, the universe and all those who would live in it would be part of one of those two worlds. For mankind, which world we live in is our choice. God's Kingdom is a kingdom of light, whose citizens acknowledge God as their King, and live by the laws of His Land. All those who have light burning from their innermost being, which is their Holy of Holies, recognize that light as being the shekinah of God, not their own.

The shamash light can only burn in a heart which is humble. First Yochanan 2:8-11 tells us that if we claim to walk in God's light, yet hate our brother; we are deceived and walk in darkness. Yosef was sold into slavery in Egypt. He was a servant in Potifar's house, and later a servant of Pharaoh. His existence was for the purpose of serving others. This requires a high degree of humility. An ounce of pride in Yosef's heart would have been the difference between becoming a leader in Egypt and being hung with Pharaoh's chief baker.

Yosef certainly had much to be angry about and complain about, but we see no evidence of this. God's light cannot burn in a complaining and discontent heart. We read in 1Timothy 1:6-9 :

"For this reason, I am reminding you to fan the flame of God's gift, which you received through s'mikhah from me. For God gave us a Spirit who produces not timidity, but power, love and self-discipline. So don't be ashamed of bearing testimony to our Lord or to me, his prisoner. On the contrary, accept your share in suffering disgrace for the sake of the Good News. God will give you the strength for it, since he delivered us and called us to a life of holiness as his people. It was not because of our deeds, but because of his own purpose and the grace which he gave to us who are united with the Messiah Yeshua."

While Yosef was in prison, he was more free than Pharaoh himself, who was a

prisoner in his own world of darkness. God also gave Yosef special gifts and skills, which Yosef was able to use in his service of Potifar and Pharaoh. He was an interpreter of dreams. Notice that the dreams were actually given to others, besides Yosef, such as those given to Pharaoh. The prophecy was actually given to those who did not know God, but they were unable to understand the messages hidden in the dreams. It was up to Yosef to provide the interpretation, thus making Pharaoh not only thankful for Yosef being able to do so, but made Yosef of value to Pharaoh despite national, spiritual, and social differences. Also, even Pharaoh recognized that Yosef's abilities were not from Yosef, but the God of Yosef, thus God was glorified amongst pagans. Yosef was also a hard worker, loyal to superiors, morally upright, and skilled in agriculture and financial management. His wisdom in such areas saved not only Egypt, but all the known world. Yosef recognized the gifts God gave him and used them to God's glory every chance he had. In this way God's shamash light burned bright for all the world to see.

Let your light shine before people, so that they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven. [Mattityahu 5:16]

God's shamash light also burned through the wisdom Yosef exercised before Pharaoh and his brothers. In Mishlei (Proverbs) 8:15-18, wisdom declares:

"By me kings reign, and princes make just laws. By me princes govern, nobles too, and all the earth's rulers. I love those who love me; and those who seek me will find me. Riches and honor are with me, lasting wealth and righteousness."

Much of success in life has to do with timing. Yosef was in the right places at the right times, even though many of those places were not desirable. Rather than suggesting that he be made governor of Egypt, he presented the problem, gave a solution, and let Pharaoh come up with the idea of putting him in charge of carrying out his ideas. All this results from exercising the wisdom of God in all that you do and how you do it.

Another big way that Yosef was able to let God's shamash light shine in his life was forgiveness. After plotting to kill him, then selling him instead to be a slave in Egypt, Yosef had plenty reason to desire revenge toward his brothers. Such bitterness would have eaten away at him through all the time he was in prison, and even effected his ability to govern Egypt. Then, when he finally met his brothers again, there were a number of things he could have done to them, but he didn't. He saw that what his brothers meant for evil, God meant for good. It was because of what they did to him that he was put into a position where he was able to save Egypt as well as his own family. Instead of seeing the bad things that happened to him as being bad, he saw them as new opportunities to spread God's light. Yeshua teaches in Mattityahu 18:21-22:

"Then Kefa came up and said to him, "Rabbi, how often can my brother sin against me and I have to forgive him? As many as seven times?" "No, not seven times," answered Yeshua, "but seventy times seven!"

God's shamash light cannot shine in unforgiveness, causing further darkness. Where

there is darkness, bad situations only get worse, however, God's light can get rid of darkness. It can turn mourning into dancing, and suffering into joy. Forgiveness is more for the benefit of the one who is wronged than the one committing the wrong. Sometimes we think that a person does not deserve our forgiveness, but you don't deserve the burden of carrying bitterness toward someone else even more.

In all this, Yosef becomes a type of the Messiah. In fact, rabbinical teachings suggest that the Messiah will have a dual identity. Messiah ben Yosef, the suffering servant, and Messiah ben David, the conquering king. Unfortunately, this is generally understood to occur at the same time, when Messiah has already come as Messiah ben Yosef, as Yeshua, and will come again as Messiah ben David, most likely in the not so distant future. The character of Yosef is seen very strongly in the character of Yeshua who stated, "I am the Light of the World."

If we walk in the light as He is in the Light, then the shamash light of Yeshua lives in us, and shines forth from us like a beacon shining out on a dark, stormy sea. Those lost on the waters can then follow our beacon to the source of our light, which is God Himself. This is true evangelism. Godliness was not just something Yosef wore like a garment, when it made him look good. It was something that came from deep inside him, was a part of him, and radiated from him as naturally as water flows from the mouth of a great river. As a result, God was able to save the whole world through the life of just one man. If you don't think that you can face impossible odds, win the respect of the ungodly around you, shine God's light in the darkest of situations, and make a positive difference in your world, look at the man with the multicolored robe, Yosef, and may your shamash light burn bright throughout the next year when the menorah is lit once again in your home.

Shalom friends, and pray for me as I seek to carry God's light to the other side of the world.