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Parashat Miketz - Rosh Chodesh Tevet - Chanukah 30 Kislev 5783 – December 24, 2022

This Shabbat is different from most others. Three Torah scrolls come out of the ark. When Rosh Chodesh Tevet occurs on Shabbat during Chanukah we read the parashah, Rosh Chodesh and Chanukah. When the month of Adar begins on Shabbat, the “extra” reading of Shekalim is read in addition to the parashah and Rosh Chodesh. The third occasion is when the beginning of the month of Nissan falls on Shabbat, and the readings for the parashah, Rosh Chodesh and HaChodesh are read. These are not common, and the cycles are different for each.

Our parashah, Miketz, opens with Pharaoh’s dream. It features skinny cows swallowing fat cows. It also has withered sheaves of wheat devouring full and beautiful sheaves. Pharaoh is filled with anxiety over his dreams. At that moment, the wine steward remembers Yosef and how he correctly interpreted the wine steward’s dream. The wine steward recommends Yosef be brought to Pharaoh to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams.

Yosef interprets the dreams and then provides Pharaoh with his plan as a solution to what appeared in the dreams. Pharaoh is so impressed that Yosef is appointed viceroy. Pharaoh gives Yosef great power, with only Pharaoh, being more powerful than him. Yosef is thirty years old. He is quite wise for a man of his years, but does he have the wisdom to manage the largest empire of that time? With no experience, who would trust him? With Yosef’s faith in G-d, G-d helped him with his dream interpretations, and G-d also blessed Yosef with leadership skills. Everyone then trusts him.

While Yosef grows into a position to save his family, he does not forget his roots. He maintains a sense of modesty understanding that it is G-d to whom Yosef owes all his success. Yosef clearly understands the value of hard work. He traveled throughout Egypt to prepare the land and people for the challenging future while maintaining the highest possible religious and moral standards in his own home.

As we bless our sons on the night of Shabbat we say, “May G-d make you as Ephraim and Menashe (Yosef’s sons).” Why? So, they do not have a life of strife. They were able to develop their spirituality, even in the idolatry of Egypt. This formula of maintaining modesty, spirituality, and religious identity, in an Egypt of immorality, injustice, and idolatry is a formula that is applicable today for leadership and morality.

Good Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom! Happy Chanukah!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

