

## Seeing What's to Come--Drasha Miketz 5767

I must confess—I'm always a little sad at the end of Hanukkah. I know that the eighth night is the climax—it's the peak of the miracle, the night when our Hanukkiyot are complete and burning bright, the time when we're bringing the most light to the darkest time of the year. But instead of my heart being warmed by the glow of my Hanukkiyah, I feel let down.

The eighth night may be the peak of Hanukkah, but it's also the end. And I can't help but focus on that sad fact even as I appreciate the sense of completion, of fullness, that accompanies the radiance of my Hanukkiyah. I begin to feel this let down somewhere around the fifth night, when I can see by the spaces left on my Hanukkiyah that the nights that remain are fewer than those that have passed. I know that, in a few short days, there will come a night that is no longer Hanukkah. My problem is that I anticipate the end of the holiday well before it actually ends.

Thankfully, anticipating what's to come does not always lead to the disappointment that I feel on the last few days of Hanukkah. A shining example of the excitement that can go along with anticipating what's to come exists in the USY-ers here with us this Shabbat. In addition to our

own LUSY chapter, we have welcomed into our community and many of us into our homes, approximately 80 teens from the Emtza and SWUSY regions—from the mid-and southwest. They are here to celebrate Shabbat with us, as a part of “Pre-convention,” a *shabbaton* leading up to USY’s International Convention, which is taking place in Boston this coming week. This weekend has been filled with fun activities, community building, and that special ruah that makes USY so remarkable. It might seem that nothing could beat the high that permeates this Shabbat for our USY-ers. It’s appropriate then, that this Shabbat coincides with the last day of Hanukkah—this is a time when the flames within our teens are burning at their brightest. However, knowing that this Shabbat will soon come to a close won’t cause their excitement to be diminished, because they are eagerly anticipating what’s to come. Starting tomorrow morning, these USY-ers will gather together with 1200 others from all across North America to begin their annual convention. Right now, it might be hard for our USY-ers to imagine anything more inspiring than experiencing Shabbat with friends both new and old. But anticipating the learning, connecting, and celebration that lie ahead this coming week keeps their spirits high, even as the see the hours of Shabbat begin to wane.

Our parasha this week is also filled with the promise of anticipating what's to come. *Parashat Miketz* tells the story of the rise of Joseph. Twice cast into a pit—once by his brothers as a child and once, more recently, by Potiphar—we read this week of his release from prison and his promotion to the court of the Pharaoh—all because of his uncanny ability to anticipate what was to come.

This ability manifested itself in dream interpretation. Joseph was known as a man of dreams. From his childhood dreams of his own ascendance, which brought him the scorn of his family, to his accurate explanations of the dreams of his fellow prisoners while in jail, Joseph had the discernment to understand the prophecies that often masked themselves as dreams. This time around, Joseph is released from prison to perform such a function. Pharaoh has had two distressing dreams. In one dream, 7 healthy and sturdy cows are eaten by 7 gaunt and ugly ones. In the other dream, 7 healthy and vital looking ears of grain are devoured by 7 thin and blighted ears. To the Pharaoh's great distress, none of his advisers can explain the meaning of these dreams. Joseph, however, is able to understand and elucidate the prophecy. He explains that the 7 gaunt cows, and the 7 scorched ears are one and the same—they represent 7 years of famine to come on the heels of 7 years of plenty. Moreover, his explanation of the

dreams emphasizes both their prophetic nature and the possibilities for averting the coming disaster. Ramban, in his commentary to this scene, explains that Joseph mentioned the 7 impending years of famine first **שהשבע** בארץ מצרים איננו חדוש גדול—because plenty in the Land of Egypt isn't such a big *hiddush*, it isn't news. After all, earlier in *Bereishit* we see Egypt described as **כגן ה'**, like the Garden of God. By mentioning the famine first, Joseph was explaining the point of the dream. God was mercifully giving Pharaoh advance warning, so that Egypt would be able to support the starving masses during the seven years of famine. Joseph's discernment impressed the Pharaoh, and he was appointed over all of Egypt, and given the responsibility of storing and saving the produce from the years of abundance in preparation for the coming scarcity.

Joseph's facility with dream interpretation, his skill with seeing what was to come, led to Egypt being a land of plenty during a period in which all the neighboring lands were suffering with famine. When people from across the region were flocking to Egypt, hoping to find some relief in Egypt's plenty, the sons of Jacob—Joseph's brothers—were among them. Joseph's foresight reunited him with his family, setting in motion the series of events that would become *B'nei Yisrael's* destiny, the destiny promised by God to

Abraham their great-grandfather—to go down to Egypt, to be enslaved there, and to be redeemed as God’s chosen people.

The confluence of Hanukkah with *Parashat Miketz* gives us the opportunity to think about how the lights of Hanukkah might guide us to anticipate what’s to come. One of the main functions of lighting the *Hanukkiyah* on Hanukkah is *pirsumei nisa*—publicizing the miracle. We light our *Hanukkiyot* and place them, when possible, in locations visible to passersby to share with the outside the miracle of the lights that is such an integral part of our celebrations. This year, along with many congregations around the country, we are choosing to think about and publicize the miracle of Hanukkah a little bit differently. Partnering with COEJL, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, we are participating in the “A Light Among the Nations” campaign, which seeks to bring a new kind of light to our community—the energy-efficient and environmentally-friendlier light of Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs. These bulbs come in a variety of “flavors,” including dimmer and three-way varieties. Like Joseph, we are blessed with the ability to see what’s to come. We know that the greenhouse gases resulting from the production of the electricity with which we light our homes has a grave impact on the environment and on the future of our

world—longer-lasting and potentially more devastating than the 7 years of famine that Egypt faced. And like Joseph, we have the ability to plan for what's to come, and to help alleviate future problems. One way we can do so is by lighting our homes with these Compact Fluorescent bulbs. On your way out of the sanctuary today, please notice the flyers and pamphlets advertising our participation in this program. Attached is an order form with descriptions of each of these bulbs. Please take these with you and return the forms to me by January 5. As a community, we have the power to see what lies ahead, and to plan for it. As we anticipate the end of Hanukkah, I pray that our days ahead are also filled with light—both spiritual and actual.

Shabbat Shalom, and Hag Urim Sameah.