

Joseph, the Wizard of Oz, Tom Cruise and Donald Trump

(Old Testament, Book of Genesis, Chapter: Mi-Ketz)

Summary: Joseph is pulled from jail-- called before the Pharaoh to interpret his nightmares that foretell the seven years of famine that will come to Egypt.

References: "The Wizard of Oz", "The Last Samurai", "The Apprentice".

Moral: That we should all have faith and the strength of Joseph to do what we can until our destinies are revealed to us.

Statistics: 767 words (approximately 5 minutes speaking time); includes definition of terms used.

Shabbat Shalom.

The parsha we read today, this last day of Hanukah is Mi-Ketz, the continuation of the story of our hero Joseph that began last week in Va- Yeishev.

The first part of Mi-Ketz is the stuff books and movies and television shows are made of.

- What three things does "The Wizard of Oz" have in common with the Parsha this week?
 - 1- We're not in Canaan anymore Toto
 - 2- (singing) We're off to see the Pharaoh (note- timed properly the audience will join in...)
 - 3- (singing) Ding Dong the Dream is Dead, the wicked Dream, the Wicked Dream (note- timed properly the audience will join in...)
- These words were spoken by two actors in the "The Last Samurai" spoke these words on a hilltop in a far-away land in a movie about a man's journey (played by Tom Cruise) where he ultimately saves a nation's soul and finds himself.

"Can a man change his destiny?"

"I believe a man does what he can, until his destiny is revealed."

- And finally, from the TV reality show The Apprentice these words ring familiar: "You're hired!"

In Va-Yeishev, Joseph has several dreams he shares with his family with all the enthusiasm any youth brings to a new and exciting discovery only to be condemned for having the dreams and creating ill-will in the family.

While it seems obvious to us now what the dreams are foretelling- we need to remember that we have the luxury of hind-sight and have heard the story, and have seen the various plays and movies for most of our lives.

However, Clearly What Joseph didn't do is interpret the dreams. He had dreams. It was his father who suggests what the dreams mean and gets pretty upset about them fueling the jealousy of his other sons. And God doesn't enter into it.

We know what happens next. Tempers flair, someone's thrown in a pit, sold to slave traders, gets a good job, has some woman trouble, ends up in jail where he does pretty well for himself and meets up with some fellows having a bad day.

A lot happened to Joseph in 10 years. But what's really interesting is what didn't happen.

Joseph didn't dream. At least the Torah doesn't tell us his dreams. And Joseph doesn't interpret dreams. The first dream interpretation is for his new found friends in jail AND Joseph gives God credit for the interpretation.

So... What was Joseph doing with all this time? Maybe he was just doing what he could until his destiny revealed itself. Because when the cupbearer remembers Joseph to the Pharaoh it's whole different Joseph.

When asked by Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, Joseph for the second time gives God / Elohim (god above gods) credit for the interpretation. This is an important play since the existing magicians, priests, et al could not help Pharaoh.

But the real genius here is how Joseph takes this opportunity to not only give G-d above gods credit for the interpretation, he says that the dreams were G-d above all gods talking to Pharaoh- warning him of things to come. Joseph changes G-d's role in this dream business and relationship to Pharaoh.

And this is the best part... after interpreting the dreams, having the opportunity of a lifetime, a chance to win it all, in the interview of his life and totally unsolicited--

Joseph not wanting to give anyone in the room a chance to think through the bomb he dropped on them, stops giving God credit and tells Pharaoh what HE, JOSEPH thinks the Wizard, I mean Pharaoh, should do.

Joseph's destiny revealed, he no longer does what he can, he jumps out and grabs what he must. And we are not told that he ever dreamed or interpreted a dream again.

And the real hero of the story?

Pharaoh. Without consideration for Joseph's background, time in jail, and obviously ahead of his time as an equal opportunity employer, Pharaoh, displaying the very quality of decision maker we appreciate in the CEOs of our most successful

companies says, "You're Hired." The downstream effect of Pharaoh's decision to place Joseph in a position of such power enables the small nomadic family tribe of Hebrews to grow in the course of time to become a Jewish Nation.

It's worth saying again, "a man does what he can until his destiny is revealed".

May we all have the strength of Joseph to do what we can until our destinies are revealed to us.

The torah reading begins on page 250 in the Etz Hayim.

Shabbat Shalom.

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Definition of Terms Used:

God- God with a capital 'G' denotes Israelite God

Hashem- Hebrew name for God, literally meaning "the name"

Parsha- Section of Torah

Sedra- Story within the section of Torah

Shabbat- Jewish Sabbath

Shalom- Hebrew greeting: hello; good-bye; peace

Sefer- Book

Torah- Old Testament, Pentateuch, Five Books of Moses