

Torah On One Foot Rabbi Matthew Berger



Hanukkah & Freedom

During Hanukkah, the Festival of Light, we almost always read the Torah portion *Miketz*. The *parasha* picks up the story of Joseph in Egypt “after two years’ time.” Some believe the confluence of Hanukkah and *Miketz* is mere coincidence, while others see dramatic connections between the two.

During Hanukkah we celebrate religious freedom. The underdog Maccabees defeating the powerful Greeks. Joseph begins his sojourn in Egypt in a weak and vulnerable state. He languishes in prison after being framed by Potiphar’s wife for making unwanted advances. When in fact he was turning her away. Both of these stories involve dreams. The dream of a small band of Israelite fighters who want to clean up and dedicate the Jerusalem Temple. And the dreams that Joseph is able to interpret for others. Which ultimately lead him to a position of power and authority in Egypt at Pharaoh’s side.

It is easy to dismiss others by calling them impractical dreamers. But it takes true strength of character to have the courage to dream of a better tomorrow and to work towards making a dream become a reality. Debbie Friedman’s beautiful song, “And the Youth Shall See Visions” beautifully encapsulates this message of hope and blessing. It’s based on the prophet Joel’s message.

“That the old shall dream dreams, and the youth shall see visions,
And our hopes shall rise up to the sky.
We must live for today; we must build for tomorrow.
Give us time, give us strength, give us life.”

This Hanukkah, let us increase the light, increase the hope, and increase the holiness in our lives.

Happy Hanukkah!