

This Week's Shabbat Message from Rabbi Rheins

♪I'm Dreaming of a Bright Shabbos! ♪

On this Shabbat we'll experience a confluence of Jewish celebrations. It will be Shabbat and Chanukah and Rosh Chodesh Tevet. It's the stuff Rabbinic dreams are made of! Three holy experiences all on one magical day.

Speaking of dreams, this week's Torah portion, *Mikeitz*, begins with a dream. Well, it was more of a series of nightmares that Pharaoh woke up from and demanded to know their significance. All the Egyptian experts were called in and none could interpret Pharaoh's dreams to his satisfaction. Here's the story:

Genesis 41:1 After two years' time, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile. 2 Then out of the Nile there came up seven cows, handsome and sturdy, and they grazed in the reed grass. 3 But presently, seven other cows came up from the Nile close behind them, ugly and gaunt, and stood beside the cows on the bank of the Nile; 4 and the ugly gaunt cows ate up the seven handsome sturdy cows. And Pharaoh awoke. 5 He fell asleep and dreamed a second time: Seven ears of grain, solid and healthy, grew on a single stalk. 6 But close behind them sprouted seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind. 7 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven solid and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke: it was a dream! 8 Next morning, his spirit was agitated, and he sent for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men; and Pharaoh told them his dreams, but none could interpret them for Pharaoh. 9 The chief cupbearer then spoke up and said to Pharaoh, "I must make mention today of my offenses. 10 Once Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and placed me in custody in the house of the chief steward, together with the chief baker. 11 We had dreams the same night, he and I, each of us a dream with a meaning of its own. 12 A Hebrew youth was there with us, a servant of the chief steward; and when we told him our dreams, he interpreted them for us, telling each of the meaning of his dream. 13 And as he interpreted for us, so it came to pass: I was restored to my post, and the other was impaled." 14 Thereupon Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was rushed from the dungeon. He had his hair cut and changed his clothes, and he appeared before Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it. Now I have heard it said of you that for you to hear a dream is to tell its meaning." 16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "Not I! God will see to Pharaoh's welfare."

Joseph, like an early Freud, interprets Pharaoh's dreams and ultimately helps him navigate through a terrible period of drought and famine. The key to the story is that Joseph had been languishing in a prison, all but forgotten. But even in the darkness of his circumstances, Joseph never lost faith. He believed in God, he believed that his life had meaning, and he believed that, one day, things would turn for the better.

His hope is like that flickering light from our *chanukiyah*. On the first night there is but one light and the *shamas*. The light they give is beautiful but relatively faint. Then, day by day by add candles increasing the brilliance that glows in our homes. One, all alone, can shine. And yet, how much more wonderful it is when we join that one to others. Together as family, friends and community, our combined light is a beacon of hope and goodness. Together, we chase away the nightmare conjurers and those that sow seeds of discord. Together we provide a safe haven where all can feel at home. Together we

are strong and capable of withstanding whatever challenges come our way. As it is written: "A threefold cord is not easily broken" (Kohelet 4:12).

So it is, on this Rosh Chodesh Shabbat during Chanukah, let this threefold cord of Jewish blessings remind us of how much we are needed by others and how much we need others. Let no one be fooled into thinking that he or she is better off separated from community. No matter how confident one is in his/her strength, history has demonstrated that we need the spirit of faith and the support of a community.

As we'll read on Shabbat morning in the special Haftarah portion: Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit -- said Adonai *Tzvaot* (Zechariah 4.6).

Shabbat Shalom v' Chag Chanukah Sameiach!

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