

This week is Shabbat Mikketz Hanukkah. During the years when it is also Rosh Hodesh, it would be one of the few times we would use three Torah Scrolls. One for the weekly section, one for the special Hanukkah reading, and one for the special reading for Rosh Hodesh. As you can see elsewhere in the newsletter, it will be a busy weekend anyway.

Since Hanukkah is a post-biblical holiday, there really isn't anything in the Torah that refers to it. So what do we read? We read from the section which discussed the final stage of dedicating the Tabernacle in the wilderness, concluding with the paragraph about what Aaron is supposed to do with the seven branched Menorah.

Meanwhile, the Torah reading describes Joseph's rise to power and his use/abuse of the power he has. It seems a bit interesting that in one way, this could be a reminder of what the Hasmonean dynasty eventually did, and perhaps a warning to all of us of how having minimally limited power usually leads to some questionable behaviors. So when we are in a position of power, we should try to bend over backward to refrain from abusing it. Most of the early sages would actually say that we should do whatever we can to avoid positions of secular power in the first place. It made perfect sense in their world, where Rome was really in charge. It still makes a little bit of sense today, as very few people survive being in charge with their integrity intact.

Since we know the rest of the story, we know that Joseph did retain his integrity, although the end of this portion makes us wonder a bit. Framing his younger brother for theft does seem a little bit underhanded.

So - light your candles beginning on Tuesday night, give the gift of your time to those close to you, and enjoy the world we are in for a little bit.