

## MIKETZ AT KOL SHALOM

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Shabbat shalom to everyone and welcome to you all.  
I'm making my debut here in Gefilte Fisher Hall.  
Hag Sameach l'Coolam, I hope you're feeling well...  
I only wish my mother could be here today to kvell.

English is my native tongue, I'm fond of verbal sparring;  
But I'm a total novice when it comes to Torah D'varring.  
I'd like to give you comments that sound sapient and right,  
But I am not a rabbi; no, I'm just a neophyte.

I thought, may God forgive me, that it wouldn't be a crime  
If I offered you my humble thoughts, and if I made them rhyme.  
As sermonizing goes, I hope it will not be the worst.  
Perhaps some day they'll say: at Kol Shalom we did it first.

Chanukah is in the air and we are all excited,  
Tonight on each menorah will be seven candles lighted.  
The parents watch their children, hearts and eyes filled full with loving,  
The children watch the candles dance; the sivitons are soving.

The latkes sizzle in the pans and fill the air with spice;  
The neighbors sniff a bit and say: I'm smelling something nice.  
My little nephew Jacob up and took a dreadful dare—  
He put two fresh soufgoniot on top of Grandpa's chair.

We tell of Judah Maccabee who made this story great.  
How oil enough for just one day burned steadily for eight.  
That little band of warriors who defied such massive threats--  
This is the time of year at which we read Parashat Miketz.

Now in Miketz two years have passed since last week's Parasha.  
Joseph's still in prison since he would not break the law.  
The Bearer of the Cup was back to working every feast,  
And Joseph probably thought that he would never be released.

Then one day said Pharaoh: Oy my head, I'm so faklemt,  
What a strange dream was the dream that just last night I dreamt.  
Seven fat and healthy kine were grazing on the Nile,  
Along came seven gaunt ones, ate them like a crocodile!

Pharaoh thought—I'll get some sleep, feel better in the morn.  
But then he had a second dream and this one featured corn!  
Seven plump and juicy ears were waving in the breeze,  
Along came seven scorched ones and devoured them with ease.

Why was it that the healthy corn and kine should meet this fate?  
How was it that the thin ones gulped them down and gained no weight?  
Said Pharaoh to his ministers: "Explain this if you can."  
The ministers said: "Pharaoh, it could be a diet plan."

He said to his magicians: "What can mean these dreams of mine?  
How do you interpret corn? And what the heck are kine?  
"Help me, wise men, help me with this dreadful mental battle!"  
The best of them could only say he thought that kine were cattle.

Then spoke the Bearer of the Cup: "A Hebrew I have seen  
Who's in your dungeon as we speak—might know what this would mean.  
The baker and I dreamed a dream one night when we were jailed.  
Joseph said that I'd go free; the baker got impaled".

So Joseph learned of Pharaoh's dreams and did not think them odd.  
He said: "They are a message that has come to you from God.  
Seven years of plenty are what Elohim has planned.  
Then seven years of famine come to devastate the land".

"So find a wise man, Pharaoh, find a man both just and fair.  
You put him in your Cabinet and tell him to Prepare!"  
Pharaoh listened carefully and then he said: "Aha!  
You're nominated, Joseph!" And Joseph said, "C'est moi!"

Said Pharaoh then to Joseph: "You have saved us from great loss.  
My signet ring is on your hand. Now buddy, you 'de boss.  
Let me make it clear, he said, I'll tell you one more time--  
Pharaoh is Mispar Echad, but you are Mispar Shtiiim."

The sages have debated much on this symbolic dreaming.  
Some of them suggest that maybe Joseph did some scheming.  
Pharaoh's dream said nothing about how to fill the void.  
But Joseph may have seen a chance to get himself employed.

Imagine that! A little guy who's living on a floor  
Convinces mighty Pharaoh that he ought to run the store.  
Here we witness something at the moment of its birth:  
This was the day that Chutzpah first appeared upon the earth!

There is much more in this portion but it's better to be terse.  
I will not risk your ire by reciting too much verse.  
So I will ask: what can we learn from what this section tells?  
How is it relevant to us, and are there parallels?

Consider: Here is Joseph who brought Pharaoh to his knees.  
Tonight we light the candles to salute brave Maccabees.  
With faith, and hope, and God, and love, it seems, I would surmise,  
That victory becomes the province of the little guys.

Do not give up the fight, we learn, 'till Victory ensues.  
How well does this epitomize the saga of the Jews!  
The story never ends; the latest scenes of which we tell  
Are being writ, in blood and grit, in Eretz Yisroel.

One other point is that the world may not be what it seems.  
How much of what we build was once the simple stuff of dreams?  
The faintest aspiration, if encouraged, may ignite  
To dissipate the darkness with a brilliant burst of light.

Now we have joined together to let such a dream arise,  
Our hearts and minds united in a solemn enterprise.  
Dedicated to Shalom, like doves that we release,  
The dream that we establish here is called the Voice of Peace.

I now conclude my comments on the Parasha, Miketz.  
I am rather glad I did it and I harbor no regrets.  
In closing I will paraphrase an ancient priestly quote:  
May you have peace on this Shabbat and on all Shabbatot.

c 2001 Kenneth W. Eckmann