

PARSHAT MIKETZ
GENESIS 41:4-44:17
HAFTARAH I KINGS 3:15-4:1
2 TEVET 5784/14 DECEMBER 2023
8TH CANDLE OF CHANUKAH



The Judgment Day

Oil on tempered hardboard by Aaron Douglas

REVIVAL OF IMAGINATION

1. After the leaves have fallen, we return
To a plain sense of things. It is as if
We had come to the end of imagination,
Inanimate in an inert savoir.
(“The Plain Sense of Things” by Wallace Stevens)
2. וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַתִּים יָמִים (Genesis 41:1)
“At the end of two years...”
“After two years’ time...”
“From two years...”

קָצַץ - cut off; קֵץ - end (of a definite time), cessation

קָצְחָה - cut off; קֵצְחָה - extremity, border; קֶצֶוּ - boundary

3. Jacob saw that there was שֶׁבֶר in Egypt. (Genesis 42:1)

שֶׁבֶר – corn, grain (שָׁבַר – break, break into pieces)

שִׁבְרָה – hope (שָׁבַר – inspect, examine; wait, hope)

There was shever in Egypt (that is the famine). There was sever (that is the plenty).

There was shever (for Joseph had been taken down to Egypt). There was sever (for Joseph became the ruler). (Bereishit Rabbah 70:17)

4. When things fall apart, the opportunity for *sever* arises. Before such a crisis, in a condition of wholeness and security, hope is irrelevant. (Avivah Zornberg, *The Beginnings of Desire*)

5. And Gabriel's going to ask him: Lord,
How long must I blow it?
And God's a-going to tell him; Gabriel,
Blow it calm and easy.
Then putting one foot on the mountain top,
And the other in the middle of the sea,
Gabriel's going to stand and blow his horn.
To wake the living nations.

(“The Judgment Day,” from *God's Trombones* by James Weldon Johnson,
illustrated by Aaron Douglas)