Twitter Thread by Joshua Cypess



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1/ Another observation the #Literalist fallacy I see about how much Trump (ym'sh) has planned all of the chaos & violence. My overarching point will be that society is structured & that means there's an inherent pattern to effects no matter the 'intelligence' behind the causes

2/ The virus should teach us this. #Literalists claim it was made in a lab because they see a killing-machine that carves its way through society and they must apply individual force & cause to the effectiveness of the biological organism

3/ #Literalists see only the tree, not the forest, so they think every effect stands alone, and thus has individual cause. This is the root fallacy of 'intelligent design'

its what led my ancestors to presume every disease is caused by a demon. Nature becomes personified.

4/ [Note, I'm not a deist, I believe in an active, caring God - the God of the Exodus, not just Genesis - but, ironically, in our hidden-faced age I can only see God's presence in the anomalies of nature (miracles), when it skips a pattern, and not from it's surface efficiency.]

5/ So nature looks intelligent, but that's another irony: we only see overt nature when it works. A dysfunctional organism, an inefficient virus, won't replicate to a degree that we'll experience & perceive it, especially as a culture

6/ We only see new viruses when the process of nature/evolution has fine-tuned it to mass productive possibility. And the key is, human design wouldn't be as efficient as the rapid evolutionary churn of unfettered biology.

7/ This is why I don't put much hope or fear into AI recreating a human brain any time soon. Machines are reflections of their makers & human ability is too limited at this point

That's also why I don't fear machines "taking over" (but I do fear the goo https://t.co/ermtJdhkgc)

8/ Gray goo isn't taking over, it's just a machine let loose without proper controls, much like a loose nuke.

(My fear of the Matrix was quelled when I realized how often I needed to clear Xerox jams and/or replace the toner on my printer)

9/ Bringing it back to Trump (ym'sh) & the plan versus accident debate

The genial genius @AlexandraErin often points out DJT is a nimble & canny opportunist, and will nearly always operate reactively, but will talk as if it's his plan all along.

10/ So we can inoculate ourselves from his blarney and know: he never plans. @TheRealHoarse, an experiential expert in malignant narcissists, often explains that 'narcs' don't plan, every move is for the immediate only. Hence why DJT constantly jumps from bad to worse

11/ Yet, like with "intelligent design" and personifying viruses, when we narrative-seeking humans try to reconstruct events, we perceive order when there isn't. This has helped the paramount con-man Trump (ym'sh) craft a tale of high acumen from a series of structural advantages

12/ DJT is also so easily manipulated it's frightening, so along the way a bunch of cannier planners have been aiming his Id like a gun at whatever problem they want smashed. Bill Barr, Putin, Erdogan, Bibi, Bannon etc., those slime DO plan things. That complicates things.

13/ But I often see whatever scheme Trump (ym'sh) initiates is usually a product of his horrible impulses trapped within a very powerful, unstable machine; and the pattern we see is an echoed reflection of the structure he's crashing into.

14/ Society has made our government as powerful as a warship and Trump (ym'sh) has been smashing buttons because he likes the noise and hates what he sees in the window.

When you add onto it all the structural inequities of our society & white supremacy, it looks like 2020 did

15/ I wish I could say what I want to here in a better way, but I wanted to get this down before I forgot it, in whatever way it occurred for me to say

Part of this is #Literalist thinking, part is seeking narrative coherence when there is none.

16/ Ultimately, as an existentialist philosopher, I come back to the observation that the world doesn't make the sense we want it to have, so we need to just take care of each other above everything else.

Love and compassion are the remedy for the injustice built into nature.

17/ Yes, my faith tells me that God will come into history and rescue with great miracles like in this week's parsha (#Vaera) but that's just one side of the Brit Bein Ha-Betarim; sometimes we see the flame but other times we're the animals the flame passes through.

18/ Knowing that God is who I will appeal for help & safety, along with a society that I help construct that operates according to justice, compassion, respect for individuals, rejecting all forms of slavery - these are the lessons of the Exodus. Not that God always swoops down.

19/ Moshe needed to learn this at the start of the parsha; he didn't understand why God allowed the slavery to get worse as a result of Moshe starting his mission.

[Note, that intro is part of how I understand the 'chevlei mashiach' - the birthpangs of the messiah]

20/ The need for mutual aid as a tool of the redemption is why IMO we say that the Israelite women were instrumental in the miracle. Moshe is designed to be just a tool of the divine (hence his paramount, self-negating, humility). The Israelites were supposed to do the real work.

21/ What was the action wrought by the women that we say was 'oto ha-nes' - part of the miracle? There are the specific, named heroes like Bat Paroh, Miriam, Shifra & Puah. The Talmud (Sota 11b) crafts a story of more collective action https://t.co/RhZgDDqpbV

22/ Whether the story is meant to be taken literally or not, the purpose is to show how many individual actions by the women, whose motivation was to keep the faith, keep believing in a future, and above all: a commitment to taking care of people.

23/ I've taught this midrash of the unnamed women as a case study in understanding how midrash works: the actions of Batya (unnamed as Bat Paro), Miriam (unnamed as "his sister"), Shifra & Puah (presumed pseudonyms) are shown to be representative of the culture of resistance

24/ In Sota 11b we see a fanciful tale of what women would do to take care of the entire nation, no different from Batya saving one life, Miriam watching her infant brother & not leaving his fate to chance, Shifra & Puah resisting through omission and subterfuge

25/ But the message of the miracle the women wrought in the Exodus, in my teaching, is to show what actually brought the full miracle of salvation: taking individual actions, even small family actions in private, that cumulatively crafted a culture of care

26/ A surface-thinking #Literalist view can see the Exodus as a mano-a-mano battle of Moshe & Pharaoh, but the midrash tells us that it was a battle fought every day, by every family, to keep the faith and keep compassion and life in the forefront

27/ This thread started with a number of disparate observations and ended with a parsha shiur. I assure you that wasn't planned (heh).

I'll end for now. Twitter is forcing me to.

@threadreaderapp please unroll.

@threader_app please compile.