

CHEVRAH TORAH 5778...Seeking ✨ Spirituality

Shabbat VAYESHEV

Genesis 37:1-11

KEY KOSHI:

HOW DOES JOSEPH'S DREAM-LIFE INFORM/GUIDE HIS SPIRITUAL LIFE-PURPOSE/GROWTH?
WHAT CAN OUR DREAMS TEACH US ABOUT A GREATER DREAM IN WHICH WE SHARE?

P'SHAT—AWARENESS... The beginning of knowing about God is simply paying attention, being fully present where you are

37:1] Now Jacob was settled in the land where his father had sojourned, the land of Canaan. 2] This then, is the line of Jacob:

At seventeen years of age, Joseph tended the flocks with his brothers, as a helper to the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. And Joseph brought bad reports of them to their father. 3] Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him an ornamented tunic. 4] And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him so that they could not speak a friendly word to him.

5] Once Joseph had a dream which he told to his brothers; and they hated him even more. 6] He said to them, "Hear this dream which I have dreamed: 7] There we were binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf stood up and remained upright; then your sheaves gathered around and bowed low to my sheaf." 8] His brothers answered, "Do you mean to reign over us? Do you mean to rule over us?" And they hated him even more for his talk about his dreams.

9] He dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had another dream: And this time, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10] And when he told it to his father and brothers, his father berated him. "What," he said to him, "is this dream you have dreamed? Are we to come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow low to you to the ground?" 11] So his brothers were wrought up at him, and his father kept the matter in mind.

1 וַיָּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִגְרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן :
2 אֵלֶּה | תְּלֻדֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בְּרִשְׁבַּע־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה
הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת־אֶחָיו בְּצֹאן וְהוּא נָעַר אֶת־בְּנֵי
בְּלֵהָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה נְשֵׂי אָבִיו וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת־
דְּבָרָם רָעָה אֶל־אֲבִיהֶם : 3 וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶהָב אֶת־
יוֹסֵף מִכָּל־בְּנָיו כִּי־בְרִזְקָנִים הוּא לוֹ וַעֲשָׂה לוֹ
כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים : 4 וַיִּרְאוּ אֶחָיו כִּי־אֵתּוֹ אֶהָב
אֲבִיהֶם מִכָּל־אֶחָיו וַיִּשְׂנְאוּ אֹתוֹ וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַבְּרוּ
לְשָׁלֵם : 5 וַיַּחֲלֵם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם וַיַּגִּד לְאֶחָיו
וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד שְׁנָא אֹתוֹ : 6 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם שְׁמַעוּ־
נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתִּי : 7 וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי חֹנֵן
מְאֻלָּמִים אֻלָּמִים בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה וְהִנֵּה קָמָה
אֻלָּמְתִּי וְגַם־נִצָּבָה וְהִנֵּה תִסְבִּינָה אֻלָּמְתֵיכֶם
וְתִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְאֻלָּמְתִּי : 8 וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶחָיו הַמֶּלֶךְ
תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם־מִשׁוֹל תִּמְשָׁל בָּנוּ וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד
שְׁנָא אֹתוֹ עַל־חֲלַמְתּוֹ וְעַל־דְּבָרָיו : 9 וַיַּחֲלֵם עוֹד
חֲלוֹם אַחֵר וַיֹּסֶפֶר אֹתוֹ לְאֶחָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה
חֲלַמְתִּי חֲלוֹם עוֹד וְהִנֵּה הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְאַחַד
עֶשֶׂר כּוֹכָבִים מִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּם לִי : 10 וַיֹּסֶפֶר אֶל־אָבִיו
וְאֶל־אֶחָיו וַיַּגִּיעְרוּ בּוֹ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַה הַחֲלוֹם
הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתָּ הֲבֹא נְבוֹא אֲנִי וְאִמִּי וְאֶחָיִךְ
לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לָךְ אַרְצָה : 11 וַיִּקְנְאוּ־בּוֹ אֶחָיו
וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת־הַדָּבָר :

REMEZ—UN-SELF-AWARENESS... God showed Moses a Torah of black fire written on white fire.

The negative ground on and by which all things can be read is itself a message.

V.5-6 *Once Joseph had a dream which he told his brothers, and they hated him even more. He said to them: Listen to this dream I had!...*

HIRSCH... Joseph had a dream and started telling it in a general way to his brothers, but as soon as he innocently started speaking, they cut him off. He persisted, however, insisting the dream was too important to ignore.

ALSHECH... The Torah suggests a number of psychological errors committed by Joseph. Aware that his brothers hated him, and “*could not speak peaceably to him,*” he should not have provoked them into conversation, certainly not by mentioning any such dream. Still less, should he have related the dream in such a way that he appeared to be boasting.

HaEMEK DAVAR... Having dreamt such a dream, Joseph hastened to tell his brothers as if they were trusted confidantes. In view of the strained relations between them, his brothers regarded his friendly openness as hypocritical and insincere, hating him all-the-more. Nevertheless, they listened, not knowing the dream related directly to them...

MUNK... Because of his dreams, our Sages say, Joseph fell into great misfortune, but on the other hand he also owed his prodigious rise to dreams... Torah seems to want us to realize the great importance of non-rational factors, such as dreams, in human existence. A person’s whole life can be dominated by this factor, far beyond what we know at the time... and its influence can have repercussions even on the historical destiny of an entire nation.

OR HaCHAYIM... Joseph shared his dreams because he wanted to end their hatred, hoping they would realize he was destined for greatness and stop hating him, knowing, someday, they would need him...

VILNA GA’ON ... Joseph understood his dreams to be prophetic in nature and knew he was required to reveal them lest he be guilty of the sin of withholding a prophecy from those for whom it was intended.

S’FORNO... Not only did he tell them his dream, but implored them “*Shim’u-Nah*” Listen attentively and understand its significance. In this manner he added to their already existent animosity

NECHAMA... S’FORNO explains that the text emphasizes that Joseph was not content merely to relate the dreams to his brothers. He pointedly emphasized its significance; he insisted that they learn its meaning!

V.8 *His brothers answered: Do you mean to rule over us? And they hated him even more for his dreams and his words.*

N.SARNA... Everywhere the dream was recognized as a means of divine communication... In the case of Joseph’s dreams, the language of communication is symbolic. God does not figure explicitly in the content of the dream; yet it is taken for granted that He is the Source of the message... This was reason enough for the brothers to take Joseph seriously. However, since the dream was also recognized as being inseparable from the personality of the dreamer, Joseph bore, in the eyes of his brothers, a measure of responsibility for the highly egocentric vision of superiority...

V.10 *And when he told it to his fathers and his brothers, his father berated him saying, “What is this dream you dreamed!?”*

RAMBAN... “*What is this dream!?*” As if to say, ‘It is nothing but idle talk!’ Alternatively, the meaning could be, ‘How dare you dream such a dream! Is it your youthful conceit that brings up such matters in your heart?’

OR HaCHAYIM... *His father rebuked him...* in order to remove his brothers’ hatred. He contradicted the interpretation by questioning its fulfillment; how his father and mother could possibly bow down to Joseph? Since the idea was ludicrous, the brothers had no cause for concern. Yet Jacob did not discount the dream in his heart...

V.11 *His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

TALMUD... “*v’Aviv Shamir et HaDavar*” R’ Chisda said: ‘Any dream which is not interpreted is like a letter which is not read...’ Yet, neither a good dream nor a bad dream is ever fulfilled... “*Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream; let one who has My Word with him speak that word of Truth.*” [Jeremiah 23:28]... R’ Levi said: A person should await fulfillment of a good dream as much as 22 years. Whence do we know? From Joseph... How many years is it from 17 to 30? Add the 7 years of plenty and two of famine, and you have 22! But R’ Chuna taught: ‘A good man is not shown a good dream, and a bad man a bad dream... For David, his whole life, never had a good dream... Amemar, Mar Zutra, and R’ Ashi were once sitting together... One of them began: If one has a dream and does not recall what he dreamt, let him stand before the Kohanim as they spread their hands in blessing and say:

“Sovereign of the Universe—I am Yours and my dreams are Yours. I have dreamt a dream and I do not know it.

Whether I dreamt about myself or my companions... fulfill it as the dreams of Joseph...” [Berachot, 55b]

MIDRASH RABBAH... R’ Levi said: He [Jacob] took pen and paper and recorded the day, the hour and the place of that revelation, as evidence for Israel’s future. R’ Chiyah interpreted: They envied him for the Divine Spirit within him, for his dreams would surely be fulfilled.

D'RASH—READING BETWEEN THE WORDS...

Prof PETER PITZELE...

"...Joseph tells his brothers his dream, and from then on they hate him more and more."

These are dreams of power, and they provide us with our first inkling of the young man's extraordinary destiny... Yet the dreams are even more... These dreams of Joseph's hint at his purpose, though at the time he can have no idea of the arduous responsibility that purpose will exact from him. These dreams represent the sum-total of Joseph's vocational call. They are figments of his imagination, gifts of Imagination, from which he will compose a life.

As an epigraph to a book of his poems, Yeats wrote, "In dreams begins our responsibility." This knowledge about the nature and importance of dreams doesn't belong only to the artist. Each of us has had such dreams, which we knew were important the instant we awoke. Such dreams can be life forming. They have the power to make us aware of possible choices... Yeats suggests that our sense of responsibility grows from our dreams as we keep faith with their purpose for us.

What is most significant about the early life of Joseph is that these dreams are all he has for an initiation. He is not visited by God as the divine and ultimate Other who shatters and shapes his life. He is not called by Mystery... He does not dream of God or wrestle with a numinous antagonist who wounds, blesses, and names him... No voice beside his own guides him... He must come to his own understandings about the power his dreams hint at, and the ways the dream will work in his life.

Joseph tells both of these dreams to his brothers. It seems at first a foolish thing to do. Does he imagine they will appreciate his reveries? Does he tell them to gull them, incite them? Are they his boast and egotism? Quite possibly, all of the above. But in my midrash of his motives I hear him tell me that he reveals these dreams because he must. They contain his necessity. They will point him to a way that will give meaning to his life. He speaks them because, though they are *his* dreams, they do not belong to him alone... Like Martin Luther King's dreams, they impel him toward his greater destiny, and the consequences of their being told are intrinsic to their realization. ... Joseph must surrender to his dreams; he must suffer their unfoldings.

These dreams of power precede power, and by themselves they do not empower. They initiate Joseph's movements into the world beyond his doorstep... beyond his ken... Who am I? Why am I here? Does my life have meaning? These are the ultimate and unanswerable riddles of the soul in its lonely cell...

In the end we see Joseph as a man who remembers his dreams and puts his trust in them. He finds some center deep within his bewilderment... In his dream he finds a kind of peace. Like Joseph we reach for what sustains us through our various imprisonments, what restores us from our derelictions. We cannot name it precisely, but we share the experience of it... We bear witness together to something intangible, sensed dimly, recognized more clearly in retrospect; something that we kept faith with. We acknowledge that what preserved us was a power beyond our personal will, indeed a kind of hidden, internal god... a dream.

Joseph had dreams of power, and in the end, he entered them. He lived according to his dreams, even when he was unaware of the dream structure that undergirded his life. When he comes to his providential realization, it is as if he knew consciously what he had known unconsciously all along, that it was not his dream; he had been a figure in God's dream...

In this sense Joseph is the one who has been “*sent ahead*” to provide for us. He has provided for us a myth gives us a glimpse into the mysteries. . . . There is nothing dated about his tale or about his wisdom. Like him we can know that we live in two worlds, or that this world is shot through with glints and glimmers of mysterious connections, far-fetched coincidences that hint to us of immense designs.

[from Our Fathers' Wells, by Prof. Peter Pitzele, pgs. 207-210, Harper Collins, 1996]

SOD—The SELF of the UNIVERSE... God's “I am” has the psycho-theological force not of dissolving individual selves but of reminding us that we were never individual selves in the first place. . . . Our selfhood endures by virtue of its participation in some greater Self,

Rabbi SHLOMO RISKIN...

“...Joseph tells his brothers his dream, and from then on they hate him more and more.”

The content of Joseph's dream is predicated to a certain degree upon his father Jacob's dream, “*of a ladder standing on the ground with its top reaching the Heavens.*” Joseph, too, dreams of the two elements in his father's dream: the earth and the heavens. His first dream is of the earth—stalks of wheat; his second dream is of the heavens—sun, moon and stars. But there are two major differences between the dreams of father and son. Jacob's dream is one; he yearns to connect heaven and earth. Joseph has two separate dreams. In Jacob's dream, God and angels are at the center; in Joseph's dream, he himself is at the center. . . . God is absent from Joseph's subconscious. . . . But as the Joseph story develops. . . invaluable lessons are learned. . . . Joseph learns that his abilities must serve a higher power. . . . Jacob only gives to Joseph the blessing of a double portion; the birthright of spiritual leadership is granted to Judah. [Gen. 49:8-10]

When Joseph understands his proper position, he is able to rise above his fall. . . and take his place as heir to the blessing.

[Torah Lights: Genesis, pgs 240-241. . . Ohr Torah Stone]