

# vayaishev

perceptions  
Issue #873

Yosef had a dream, and he told it to his brothers, [which made] them hate him even more. (Bereishis 37:5)

DREAMS ARE A fascinating topic in and of themselves, but particularly so after seeing the significant role they have played in Jewish history. True, Ya'akov's dream was really a prophecy, but being a prophet, could he have not learned the same things while conscious? Why did he have to see them in a dream specifically?

This week's parsha starts off with dreams, and the story revolves around them. Clearly they are also prophecy, at least that is the way Yosef and Ya'akov looked at them. His brothers looked at them more as wild fantasies, at least the first one. The fact that their hatred of Yosef turned to jealousy may be an indication that they were beginning to sus-

pect the Yosef's night visions were more than just mere dreams.

The Talmud, recorded thousands of years later, long after the close of prophecy, also did not make light of dreams. On the contrary, it spends a couple of folio pages on the topic, even providing some of the more "common" interpretations. It does say that all dreams usually contain some aspect of nonsense, but the rest, according to the Talmud, is certainly interpretable.

Most of us don't remember our dreams in the morning and the ones we do usually fade away after a few hours. I'm always amazed how I can wake up with a full memory of a dream, and within a short time, have a difficult time recalling much of it. Days later, I have forgotten it altogether, as if it was "written" in disappearing ink.

Last night I looked up online if dreaming also occurs in non-REM sleep. Lately I have found that I can drift off and within seconds have some kind of dream. Even more interesting is that I can be aware that it is only a dream, because I am still caught between the two realities. This is weird and fascinating stuff.

What is also interesting is how, after so many years and advancements in brain technology, we still don't know for sure why we dream. Theories abound, but one thing is for certain. Dreams are like manuscripts that got torn up, thrown into the waste basket, and then reassembled without any care taken to know which pieces belong to which manuscript.

It's just so surreal how characters end up in plots that have nothing to do with them in real life. A few nights ago a neighbor of mine was in my dream, stuttering (he has no stutter) and bashful (he is not bashful at all), asking to use

my washing machine. He certainly doesn't need MY washing machine. Go figure.

People who lose loved ones speak about "visitations" during dreams, or at least "dream" of having them. A couple times, my father was in my dream, and I seemed to be aware that he had passed away. In one dream, he himself even told me that he could not do something for me because he was no longer alive. The brain can be VERY creative, even while asleep, perhaps ESPECIALLY while asleep.

The Ramchal explains what happens to a person while they sleep. Their levels of soul loosen up, and the upper levels are able to ascend to higher levels of spiritual reality, even meeting up with souls of those who have died. Kabbalah even teaches that it is possible for a person's soul to learn Torah in the upper realms while asleep.

Since a person's levels of soul always remain connected, the nighttime experiences of the upper levels are communicated to the lower levels, and might be the reason for some dreams. It might also be the reason for *deja vu*, since past certain levels, time no longer exists as we know it, and the soul can see the future as well.

It's a fascinating topic for sure. There may be several reasons why God made us with an ability/need to dream. I personally think one of them is to remind us that life is not just one level of consciousness, but many. Why is this important to recall? Because when we don't, as we see in this week's parsha, we can misread reality, and that can be, and usually is, disastrous.

Spiritually this is true. There are five levels of consciousness, and there are different ways to access them, if you know how, if you are qualified, and most important of all, if you are worthy. These levels actually correspond to our five levels of soul, the upper four of which a person will have

difficult accessing on lower spiritual levels, greatly limiting their vision.

It's like five people on five levels of an apartment building. Each floor faces the same direction and has the same sized window. But the view of the person on the second level will include more than the view of the person at ground level, as will be the case each floor up. The higher up you are, the more the view will incorporate, and therefore, the more accurate a description of reality it will be.

That was certainly the case with Yosef and his brothers. It seems that his viewpoint was different from theirs, higher up. In 22 years, they would find out just how much higher up, when Divine Providence would force them to that higher level through a series of upsetting events. This is a lesson to take to heart, because the same thing can be true about all of us.

And, if you want to understand Chanukah on a more sophisticated level, then you should read my my book, "Once Revealed, Twice Concealed." The PDF is available through my site, and the softcover and Kindle versions are purchasable through Amazon. There are things about Chanukah you would never have dreamed of, but SHOULD know.

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

### Issue #10: Chanukah

What was Esther's strength in being able to stand up to Haman? Haman came from Amalek, and Amalek came from Eisav, whose spiritual merit was that he honored his father. This is why, we are told, Ya'akov Avinu was afraid of Eisav in last week's parsha. For the 22 years that Ya'akov

was away from home, he was unable to honor his father and mother, while Eisav did. Ya'akov was concerned that maybe it would give him the spiritual edge at the time of their confrontation.

Esther, on the other hand, had been an orphan. Parentless, she had no obligation to honor her parents, and therefore she never sinned in this mitzvah. Thus Esther was able to stand up to Haman, whose descendant had the merit of performing the mitzvah.

Nice vort, eh?

Are you kidding? There are so many questions that not only COULD be asked here, but MUST be asked here. This vort is like the one Rebi Akiva told his students to wake them up: What was Esther's merit to be queen over 127 provinces? The fact that Sarah lived 127 perfect years.

Really?

What's the CONNECTION?

WHAT'S the connection?

God.

God?

Yes, God.

Why more here than anywhere else?

It's not. It's just that holidays like Purim and Chanukah which emphasize this point, that history doesn't have to always make sense to us, as long as it makes sense to God, is often the case. We like to believe that history can never be wackier than we can fathom, but the truth is, it can.

Well, wackier to US. It is perfectly logical to God, and would be to us as well if we could see history as He does. This is in essence what God told Moshe Rabbeinu after his vision of Rebi Akiva's cruel death, which he questioned (Menachos 29b). God told him, Kabbalah explains, that his

answer lay in realms too high for him to fathom, so he would have to remain with his question for the time being and just have FAITH.

What would Moshe Rabbeinu have said had he lived to see the world today? What would he have asked God about the way people live and what they get away with? At least Nebuchadnetzar, as evil as he was, still believed in God. Today, even “decent” people don’t.

For the Jew who had jumped ship and “gone with the flow”, the world is no big deal and he experiences everything as just par for the course. But, for the Jew who has remained faithful to the Torah way of life, history appears quite off-kilter. As Rebi Yehoshua ben Levi’s son told him, this is a world in which up is down and vice-versa (Pesachim 50a).

However, when we light the Menorah, we open a spiritual portal through which we can glance at the world of God, in which up is up and down is down. We are reminded that though the history does not make sense to us, it does to God Who will, when the time is right, sort it all out.

In the meantime, it is our job to do what we can to right the wrongs, and to remember that no matter how out of control history seems to be, God always has a handle on it. And, every once in a while He shines a light through the darkness to tell us this, so that we can remain faithful and hopeful.