

PARSHAS MIKETZ

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

It will help to understand the story of Yosef and his brothers as well as the beginning of this weeks parshah, if we examine the nature of the dream.

Some dreams do not flow from the Divine inspiration nor are they the product of the purified wisdom. "Our sages taught that a person dreams only of the prompting of his heart" (Brachot 25). These are the dreams that are simply the result of what a person ate or drank, or the business transactions or discussions held before sleep, or the effect of their physical or mental health, or simply expressions of secret desires and ambitions. Yeshayahu said, "As the hungry person dreams that he has eaten only to awaken to his hunger and the thirsty person dreams that he drinks but wakes up faint with thirst". Such dreams do not have to be false or evil, they are merely of temporary meaning and thus completely irrelevant: of them it is written, "That which is dreamt neither adds or detracts anything" (Bereishit Rabba, chapter 9). The significance and interpretation of such dreams simply are the verbalization of whatever the interpreter thinks appropriate; dreams follow the mouth.

Then there are the dreams that come to a person from spiritual and heavenly sources in response to that person's religious yearnings; expressions of situations or dilemmas requiring guidance and instruction. When a person sleeps they are freed from the restraints that the mind and intelligence impose on the feelings and yearnings, so the nefesh is able to receive the responses of the heavenly and spiritual sources. Chazal teach us that dreams are one sixtyth of prophecy, fragmented and unclear but nevertheless resulting from an outpouring of heavenly wisdom and spiritual understanding. Such was the dream in which Hashem made victory known to Gideon on the eve of his battle with Midian when he was doubtful of the results of that battle. Shaul Hamelech was dejected because he did not receive guidance in the form of such a dream as to the results of the impending war with the Philistines.

Then there is a third type of dream, that is a revelation of the Divine Will conveyed to Man without any desire on his part to receiving such revelation or seeking Divine guidance. These dreams are a means of furthering and implementing Divine Providence. They serve to show the prophets what the Divine plan for the future is. Furthermore, they make people aware of G-d's intervention in human affairs whether it be to foretell reward or punishment for their actions. Since they flow from a heavenly source and have their roots in Divine knowledge, such dreams are detailed, clear and logical in their sequence, show full awareness of the particular time, place and circumstances of what they foretell and are to be interpreted only in wisdom. Such dreams are true and so are of

lasting effect and highly relevant. The dreamers of such dreams are aware that Hashem is revealing His Will to them. These were the dreams in which Hashem made His will known to Avimelech with regard to Avraham and Sarah or to Laban when he chased after Yaakov. So were the dreams that foretold the future and that have materialized, such as the dreams of the sar maskim and sar hatabachim. Where the meaning of the dreams is unclear then since they are of a Divine origin, their interpretation can only be made by one whose traits, thoughts and actions are spiritual, just and pious ; Beruach Hakodesh.

Their inability to distinguish to which type Yosef's dreams belonged, explains the decision of his brothers to test them and to leave to Hashem the decision as to whether this was Divine Revelation or merely flights of his imagination. In this inability too, was rooted Pharaoh's turmoil over his dreams and their meaning.

How did Pharaoh know that Yosef's interpretation was correct while that of his soothsayers and magicians were false?

The sar hamashkim's description of Yosef's explanation of the dreams in the jail, convinced Pharaoh that indeed Yosef had the Divine Wisdom needed for the correct interpretation of his dream and that he could make clear the heavenly revelation contained in it. The disjointed and illogical versions of his wise men made it clear that their explanations were false. "Pharaoh was angry.. and put me and the chief baker in custody....we each dreamed a dream in one night.... A young man, a Hebrew servant.. and to each man according to his dream did he interpret" (40:9-13). Yosef as a Hebrew servant, a foreigner, could have no knowledge of the court intrigues and politics and so could not deduce their past nor their futures from them, nor would he know of Pharaoh's birthday. Both dreams were dreamt on the same night so Yosef had no time available to learn from one concerning the other. They were not separated from each other at any time so that he could not question each one separately and thereby gain additional information. Nevertheless, each one had his separate dream explained and each of them was fulfilled in accordance with that explanation. Yosef saw that the physical part of their dreams was natural and real not merely a parable and therefore explained that the cupbearer would be restored to his previous post as foretold by the grapes and cup, whereas the baker had seen birds eating of the baskets that foretold birds of prey who signified death. The knowledge that the 3 bunches of grapes and the 3 baskets represented 3 days came to him through Divine Wisdom.

The Egyptian magicians believed that dreams were only parables that concerned only the personal affairs of the dreamer and that separate times of dreams meant that each one was independent. So they explained the dream of the cows as symbols of daughters. The fat and beautiful ones were the 7 who would be born to Pharaoh and the 7 others as a sign that the daughters would die. The dream about the sets of 7 ears of wheat they saw as a parable of 7 kingdoms that he would conquer and the 7 he would lose. However, Pharaoh's awareness that the dreams belonged to the third type of

dream viz. the product of Divine wisdom and G-d's revelation to men, is shown by the wording of the text. "[After the dream of the seven cows] So Pharaoh awoke. [After the second dream] And Pharaoh awoke and behold it was a dream. And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled" (40:5-8). At first the dream could be shrugged off casually, as the text does. Only after the repetition was it clear that it was important, so only then does the text say that it was a dream and that his spirit, in recognition of that importance, was troubled. From the clearness of the dream and the logic of its construction, it was understood that this dream was true and not the product of Pharaoh's imagination, his physical or mental condition nor his personal desires. The fact that his soul was disturbed by the dream and that this was in the clarity of the morning was further proof of its validity; both according to the philosophers who have said that that is a time when our conscious feelings operate and according to Chazal who taught that, "One of the 3 types of dreams that are realized are the dreams of the morning."

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Dr. Tamari is a renowned economist, Jewish scholar, and founder of the Center For Business Ethics (www.besr.org) in Jerusalem.