

# JEWISH DREAMS

*by Rabbi Berel Wein*

The Torahs use of the word miketz at the conclusion - instead of the word acharei after or later is the cause for much comment amongst our sages. The rabbis seem to indicate that the word miketz or ketz signifies not only a chronological change in time frame but rather a complete change from the past situation to a completely different situation and even another era. Pharaohs dreams signify not only that two years have passed since Yosef was imprisoned but rather that a completely new situation is now about to be constructed that will naturally impinge on the lives of Pharaoh and Yosef. One of the great characteristics of Yosefs personality, as we view it through the lens of the Torah narrative, is his adaptability to change circumstances while retaining his inner self-confidence and rock-hard faith. Even when he is in the pit with snakes and scorpions surrounding him, pleading for his life from his own brothers, he is still Yosef, the confident and optimistic dreamer. Sold into Egyptian slavery, his talents and drive bring him to a position of importance in the house of Potiphar. At no time does he relinquish his belief in himself and in the realization of his dreams. It is the dream of his father and brothers eventually recognizing his greatness and holiness that allows him to avoid the pitfall of Potiphar's wife. And even in prison he is the expert on dreams, not only his dreams but those of others as well. His adaptability to fortune, both good and bad, and his ability to remain Yosef the righteous one throughout his life is what sets him apart in the story of the Jews and earns him eternal approbation and approval.

In Yosef we see the story of the Jewish people generally. In a world of billions of people of other faiths, of oppressors and murderers, of hardship and never-ending challenge and changing circumstance, of the rise and fall of empires and superpowers, the Jewish people have remained constant in their self-confidence and the eventual fulfillment of their dreams. The outside world often mistook this Jewish strength of adaptability and holy stubbornness for arrogance (Remember DeGaulles statements about Israel and the Jews after the Six-Day War?) It is often disturbing that the only interpreters of dreams for a world that finds itself imprisoned by terror, materialism and emptiness of meaning are the Jews and the Jewish values that have created other faiths and propelled human civilization forward. The State of Israel and the resurgence of Torah within a significant section of the Jewish world in the face of overwhelming hatred, discrimination and assimilation, emulates this ability of Yosef to remain Yosef no matter what changes occur in ones life and society. Our generation also came into being at a time of miketz the ending of an era and the beginning of a completely new world of politics, technology and mass media. The old world of nostalgia is gone, never to return. How we will adapt to the new realities of our existence and yet

remain faithful to our heritage and to the realization of our ancient dreams is the supreme challenge of our time. All of Jewish history teaches us that, all statistics and pessimistic experts notwithstanding, we will also be able to be equal to the challenge of Jewish survival and growth and the actualization of the Jewish dream here in Israel and throughout human society.

Shabat shalom.

Chanuka sameach.

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