

YOSEF RECOGNIZES HIS BROTHERS

by Rabbi Berel Wein

The main point in this week's parsha is that Yosef recognizes his brothers while they don't recognize him. The obvious reason for this is that Yosef, pursuing the fulfillment of his heavenly dreams, is looking for his brothers, while they, the brothers themselves, are not partners with Yosef in the dreams and therefore they cannot imagine that they are bowing before Yosef.

There are dreams that are private, personal, and many times impossible to share with others. However, sometimes there are dreams that are so transcendent and affect generations and nations that they must be shared with others. Yosef's dreams are of this very nature. The brothers misinterpreted Yosef's words as being an attempt to rule over them and control them. The dreams however truly implied that Yosef would save Yaakov and his family in a time of hunger and crisis.

Yosef wished that his dreams would be shared by his brothers as well. The brothers, who saw those dreams as being malevolent, did not want any part in their fulfillment or accomplishment. On the other hand, Yaakov does share in Yosef's dreams and though he reprimands Yosef for his attitude towards his brothers, he guards the message of the dreams and is somehow certain that they will be fulfilled.

Someone who does not share in the dream will find it difficult to identify with the dreamer or even to recognize affinity with him. Yosef who wishes his dreams to be their dreams immediately recognizes his brothers. The brothers, who as yet do not share Yosef's dreams, cannot really recognize him or identify with him.

The Jewish people over the ages have dreamt many dreams. Some of them were private dreams. As such, they did not really have a lasting effect. However, there were grand, national, and even universal dreams that were part of Jewish tradition and society. These dreams included the return to the Land of Israel, establishing a just and moral Jewish society based on Torah values, and a general commitment to further civilization and improve human society.

The test of the Jewish continuity and loyalty was whether the individual Jew shared in these great dreams. Those who did not eventually could no longer recognize their own brothers. Because of this, these Jews eventually became negative forces in Jewish society and in world society as well. Jewish education over the ages not only taught Torah knowledge and Jewish tradition but it also implanted within the Jewish soul and mind the visions and dreams that are the lifeblood of Jewish survival. Many of the problems that exist in today's Jewish society, here in Israel, but especially in the

diaspora, result from the fact that Jewish dreams are no longer shared by many Jews.

This explains much of the negativity and bitterness that is unfortunately present in the Jewish world. We need to see the dreamers as heroes and the visionaries as being the true leaders of our people. Yosef still lives with his dreams, his stubbornness, his hopes and his goodness. May we, his brothers, be wise enough to recognize him in our midst.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Chanuka,
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Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com