

Parashat Miketz

Do We Need to Make our Dreams Come True?

You are What You Desire

I have always been a dreamer, believing that even the impossible is possible if we desire it enough. “Each Jewish person can reach the very highest level, as Rambam teaches “Everyone can be worthy of becoming a *tzaddik* like Moshe Rabbeinu” (*Hilchot Teshuva* 2:5). Even if an iron wall separates between Israel and our Father in Heaven – we can break through it! רצון/*Ratzon* – desire is one of the highest powers of the soul stemming from our *Keter* – crown. Without desire, nothing would ever be achieved. Through the “school of hard knocks,” we can bounce back even higher as long as we keep believing in our dreams. I’m saddened when I experience people resigning and giving up on life. They give up in their own ability to achieve their goals. They give up on even having goals, since they do not believe they can achieve them. People are divorced right and left, because they give up on working on their relationships. Without even trying, or at least not trying hard enough due to their lack of desire, they resign themselves to accept that it is impossible to reach a mutual understanding even with people who love them very much. I believe it is underlying fears that make people give up and run away from the desires of their soul. They are afraid of failure. The more effort we put into achieving our goals, the more we risk getting hurt when things don’t always work out our way. We need to learn to be willing to take risks in life. “No pain no gain.” Even if we desire something very much like getting married, having a child or making Aliyah to Israel and in the end, it didn’t work out, G-d forbid, that doesn’t mean that our desires, prayers and effort failed to bear fruit. None of our yearning for these lofty goals is ever lost. Our yearning for holy achievements and pursuing our desires is an accomplishment in itself. It has eternal value and may even cosmically help others to achieve the goals that we desired so much.

Becoming Partners with Hashem in Fulfilling Our Dreams

Yosef was a master dreamer (*Bereishit* 37:19). He had a vision, desiring to make a difference to the world. He wanted this very strongly, thought about it very much and even dreamed about it. His brothers hated him because they understood that he wasn’t just telling them his dreams. The dreams reflected his strong desire, which they interpreted to indicate that he wanted to rule over them. While a slave in Egypt, Yosef never gave up on his dreams. It is hard to understand how Yosef could allow all those years to pass – knowing full well the torture it must be causing his father – yet never bothered to send him a message? Ramban answers that Yosef knew that his dreams were prophetic and therefore, he knew they must be fulfilled. The first dream has all his brothers bowing to him, without Ya’acov. This is why Yosef insisted that Binyamin come back with his brothers. Until his first dream had been fully realized, he could not reveal himself – for doing so would bring Ya’acov as well, and that was already encroaching on the territory of his second dream (Ramban, *Bereishit* 42:9). We learn from Yosef to be partners with Hashem in fulfilling our dreams, even if it takes great efforts and risks. Since the destruction of our Temple, prophecy has been lost to us (*Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra* 12). Nevertheless, we still get glimpses of prophetic insight, especially through our dreams, as it states, “In a dream, in a vision of the night... [G-d] opens the ears of man” (*Iyov* 33:15).

Dreaming of Your Deepest Desires

I know a woman whose daughter soon after her marriage cut off all ties with her family. I can hardly imagine something more painful than not being able to talk with your own daughter and her children. This woman suffered so much, having never met her own grandchildren even though they didn't live far from her. She cried and cried and couldn't stop thinking about her grandchildren and her daughter. She couldn't understand how her beloved daughter had changed so radically and turned against her, when her mother only wanted the very best for her. She was hurt and upset over her daughter's behavior, but even though the years passed, she never gave up on reconnecting with her. One night she had a dream. In her dream, she experienced that her husband had somehow managed to bring her daughter and her family to spend a Shabbat with them. She finally could hug her dear daughter again. As she hugged her, she felt her daughter's hard façade melt away, and she got in touch with her vulnerability. Great feelings of compassion and love for her daughter welled up in her as she kept hugging her daughter. Then she woke up as the sun was rising.

Self-fulfillment is Bringing Your Dreams to Fruition

"Rabbi Yochanan said, three kinds of dreams are fulfilled, an early morning dream, a dream which his friend dreamed about him, and a dream which is interpreted within the dream... Shemuel son of Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan, A man is shown in a dream only what is suggested by the thoughts of his heart, as it says, 'As for you, Oh King, your thoughts came into your mind upon your bed' (*Daniel 2:29*)," (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 55b*). This woman dreamer, being a learned rebbetzin realized that her dream had great significance since two of these conditions applied to her dream: It was an early morning dream, and it was a dream in which she dreamed about her friend – i.e. her beloved daughter. She then shared her dream with her husband, making sure that he would interpret it to be fulfilled as "Rabbi Chisda said, a dream, which is not interpreted is like a letter which is not read" (*Babylonian Talmud Berachot 55a*). Further on, Rabbi Eleazar asks, "From where do we know that all dreams follow their interpretations?" It states (*Bereishit 41:13*), "It came to pass, as he interpreted for us, so it was" (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 55b*). Yet, the rebbetzin understood that telling over her dream to her husband was not enough to ensure its fulfillment. She learned this from Yosef who went to great length to ensure that his dreams would be fulfilled by making his brothers bring their little brother, Binyamin to him (*Bereishit 42:20*), so that his dream about the eleven sheaves bowing down to him could be fulfilled. Therefore, the dreaming rebbetzin asked her husband to contact their son-in-law, their daughter's husband and invite them for Shabbat. The husband was a bit reluctant as it was hard to believe that their daughter and her family would finally spend a Shabbat with them, after so many years of separation. Nevertheless, he followed his wife's fervent request and sent a friendly email to his son-in-law, inviting them to come. It took many days before he received an answer. Days, hours and minutes that the rebbetzin prayed, cried and prayed. Then finally, they received their answer. Their children and grandchildren were coming for Shabbat!!!! They couldn't believe it, dancing together in the dining room. We too, can learn from this story and from Yosef to take an active role in fulfilling our dreams and actualizing our goals.