**[The Whole World in Her Hands! Parshat Vayeishev](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-whole-world-in-her-hands-parshat-vayeishev)**

אֲסַפְּרָ֗ה אֶֽ֫ל חֹ֥ק יְֽהוָ֗ה אָמַ֘ר אֵלַ֥י בְּנִ֥י אַ֑תָּה אֲ֝נִ֗י הַיּ֥וֹם יְלִדְתִּֽיךָ׃
*I am obligated to proclaim: The Divine says to me, “You are My child, today I give birth to you…”*
(Psalm 2:7)

Rabbi Nahum of Stepinesht once said of his brother, Rabbi David Moshe of Tchortkov:

“When my brother chants from the Book of Psalms,*Hashem* calls down to him: ‘David Moshe My son, I am putting the whole world into your hands – now do with it whatever you like.’ Oh, if only *Hashem* gave me the world, I would know very well what to do with it! But David Moshe is so faithful a servant that when he gives the world back, it is exactly as it was when he received it…”

This anecdote of Rabbi Nahum, the son of Rabbi Yisrael of Rizhyn, is strange; it seems to say that non-action is a virtue. It seems to say that one who does nothing it improve the world is better than one who tries to improve the world. How can this be?

When Joseph is thrown into the dungeon, two prisoners come to him with their disturbing dreams, hoping that Joseph will interpret the dreams for them. Joseph responds:

הֲל֤וֹא לֵֽאלֹהִים֙ פִּתְרֹנִ֔ים – *Don’t interpretations belong to the Divine?*
(Genesis 40:8)

Joseph is saying that his ability to see the meanings of their dreams is a gift that comes from beyond; it’s not really his own doing.

But on a deeper level, “dream” is a metaphor for all experience. After all, what is a dream? It is an experience we have while we’re sleeping, an experience that seems real when it’s happening, but turns out to be some kind of projection of the mind.

Similarly, our waking experiences too are comprehensible only because our minds project narrative onto them. We tend to be “asleep” in relation to most of what is going on, so that the mind can piece together a story that makes sense. And, central to that story is the character of “I.”

From our ordinary state of mind, in which we are mostly asleep, it seems there is this “I” that does things, that acts on the world, that causes things to happen. But what really is this I? Is it really something separate? Isn’t this I part of the flow of Reality, of Existence, of the Divine?

On this level, Joseph is saying: *Halo l’Elohim pitronim – isn’t this dream of life we are having correctly interpreted as only the Divine?*

From this point of view, Rabbi David Moshe isn’t being lauded by his brother for not doing anything, but rather for *not seeing himself as the doer;* he “gives the world back exactly as it was when he received it” – meaning, he gives credit back to the Divine for what happens, just as Joseph does: הֲל֤וֹא לֵֽאלֹהִים֙ פִּתְרֹנִ֔ים

This is why Joseph is able to receive such extreme hardship without any complaint; he receives everything from the Hands of the Divine, including his own dreams, from which he knows that he will one day attain greatness. So, when the world seems to hate him, he still regards himself as beloved by the Root of the world. There’s a hint of this in the opening of the *parshah:*

וְיִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל אָהַ֤ב אֶת־יוֹסֵף֙
*Now Israel loved Joseph…*
(Genesis 37:3)

*Israel loved Joseph –* “Israel” means “strives for the God” or “straight to the God” – in other words, Joseph’s sees through the surface of things to the Divine love underneath, even though his experience of the world seems to be the opposite:

וַיִּרְא֣וּ אֶחָ֗יו… וַֽיִּשְׂנְא֖וּ אֹת֑וֹ
*And his brothers saw…and they hated him…*
(Genesis 37:4)

*His brothers –* “Brothers” represents the things and beings in the horizontal dimension of experience – the forms we encounter in time. But “Israel,” the “Father,” represents the vertical dimension of experience – our encounter with Timeless that abides within and as all things. This is the great skill of the spirit that we are called upon to develop: to know the love that flows from Being, even when hatred seems to flow from the many beings.

In *Pirkei Avot* (6:6), it is said that Torah is acquired through 48 qualities, one of which is:

קַבָּלַת הַיִּסּוּרִין
*Kabalat HaYisurin – receiving of painful feelings*

Our tendency is to resist that which is painful. But if we are aware that the pain itself is a means toward awakening out of the dream of separateness, then we can receive pain as a gift, even as an expression of Divine love, as it says a few qualities later:

וְאֵינוֹ מַחֲזִיק טוֹבָה לְעַצְמוֹ, אָהוּב
*Eino makhazik tovah l’atzmo, Ahuv – Not claiming credit for yourself, being Beloved…*

Consciousness glistens on the rustling leaves of the present moment; there is a freedom and a beloved-ness that shines forth when we let go of the “I” that acts, and receive this moment from the hands of the Divine. Then we can know directly that we too are nothing but a fleeting form of Divine Reality, a moment of consciousness awakening in this form:

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*I am obligated to proclaim: The Divine says to me, “You are My child, today I give birth to you…”*
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***More on Pasrshat Vayeishev...***

J[**ust Say Yes! Parshat Vayeishev**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/just-say-yes-parshat-vayeishev)

וַיֵּ֣שֶׁב יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב בְּאֶ֖רֶץ מְגוּרֵ֣י אָבִ֑יו בְּאֶ֖רֶץ כְּנָֽעַן
Jacob dwelt in the land of his father’s sojourning, in the land of Canaan…

Jacob’s name, Ya’akov, actually means “heel.” So, to say that he “dwelt in the land” evokes the image of feet touching the earth, being grounded in connection with the sensory world. The “land” is the place where his “father sojourned.” On the surface, this is referring to the other patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac. But on a deeper level, aviv – his father – is a metaphor for the Divine, or the transcendent dimension Being, the hidden Presence beneath all forms.

The “land” is also called Canaan. Canaan begins with kaf - nun, which spells kein – “yes.”

So, on this level, we can freely this verse:

Dwell in connection with the Divine – say “yes” to this moment.

On the deepest level, it is already the nature of your consciousness to say “yes” to this moment, to simply shine light on what is without judgment. The nature of thought, on the other hand, is discernment – saying both “yes” and “no,” making judgments.

We need both of these levels; we need both discernment and simple openness to what is. Without the openness, we become trapped in a narrow, thought-created identity. But without the discernment, not only wouldn’t we be able to function in life, but we also paradoxically wouldn’t even be able to sustain the openness either, because to realize the deepest “yes” level of our being requires a radical discernment and decision to come fully to your present moment experience as it is and simply dwell with it:

וַיֵּ֣שֶׁב יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב בְּאֶ֖רֶץ
Vayeishev Ya’akov Ba’aretz
The Heel Dwells on the Earth…

Bring the awareness of your mind all the way down to the heels of your feet. Let your awareness be like light, simply shining outward, illuminating whatever arises in your experience. This is the secret of Hanukah, which comes in the darkest time of the year to illuminate the eternal dimension of Being within ordinary day-to-day life, which sometimes feels “dark” when obscured by time and the thinking mind...

[**The Evil Shepherd- Parshat Vayeishev**
​](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-evil-shepherd)12/22

​​This week’s reading begins with the story of Yosef, or Joseph:

“Yosef hayah ro’eh et achav- Joseph was a shepherd with his brothers… v’hu na’ar et b’nei Vilha v’et b’nei Zilpa- and he was a youth with the sons of Bilha and Zilpa...”

It then says that he brought evil reports about his brothers to their father.

Now the word for “shepherd” is ro’eh, and the word for “evil” is ra’ah-exactly the same letters, just voweled a little differently, hinting at a connection between shepherding and judging others. This is also reflected in the wording. A more straightforward way of saying that he was a shepherd with his brothers would be “hayah ro’eh **im**achav”- instead of “hayah ro’eh **et** achav”- which could be read that he’s being a shepherd at his brothers.

This hints at two different levels of what’s going on. On the surface, Joseph and his brothers are out shepherding the sheep. But at the same time, Joseph sees himself as shepherding his brothers. He feels that he’s above them, judging them and tattling on them to their father.

His vision of himself as above the rest of his family is of course prophetic- he eventually becomes an actual ruler with Pharaoh in Egypt. But at this point in the story, his leadership is immature- as it says, “V’hu na’ar- and he was a youth.”

There’s a level of your own being that is above everything. It's the place within you that it sees the fullness of whatever arises in your experience, yet remains free from it, unencumbered by whatever your situation is. That level of inner freedom is simple awareness. Another name for it is Hokhmah or Wisdom, because from that place of awareness, wisdom naturally flows and can guide you in your particular situation. So your awareness is above your situation, on one hand, yet offers its steady guidance at the same time- just like a ro’eh- a shepherd- guides the flock, yet is not itself a sheep.

The thinking mind, however, loves to claim the wisdom of awareness for itself in order to feed the ego. The ego thinks, "This is my wisdom"- and then gets gratification from believing itself to be above others. That’s Joseph as the na’ar- the youth- who brings evil reports. As long as the immature mind coopts the wisdom of awareness, the ro’eh becomes ra’ah- an evil shepherd.

So what’s the remedy? The remedy is hidden within the letters. The words ro’eh and ra’ah are Reish-Ayin-Heh. The middle letter, Ayin, literally means “eye,” hinting at awareness as the deepest identity of the shepherd. The Reish literally means “head,” hinting that as long as the “head” is ruling the “eye”- as long as the thinking mind claims awareness for itself, the shepherd is evil.

But if you change the Ayin to an Alef, the letter of Oneness, then the word becomes Re’eh which means, “see.” When you simply see, not in the literal visual sense but in the sense of simple perception, then you can notice the antics of the mind and ego and not get seduced by them. From this comes mature leadership, where the wisdom that pours into the mind is not coopted or claimed, but is humbly received as a gift.

So on this Parshat Vayeyshev, the Sabbath of Dwelling, may we practice dwelling in the simple Presence and receive the gift of guidance from the Ultimate Shepherd. May we be guided by this inner wisdom on a path of love, renewal and healing.

Good Shabbos!!!
-Brian Yosef

[**Being Now, Wanting Now- Parshat Vayeishev﻿**
​](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/being-now-wanting-now-parshat-vayeishev)
A few years ago, I was at a Shabbat table where someone was describing the different character traits of Jacob and his brother Esau:

“Jacob could see the big picture. He planed for the future, while Esau only cared about satisfying his immediate desires. Esau lived in the here and now.”

I cringed when I heard that, because “living in the here and now” and “wanting something here and now” couldn’t be more different.

So many people don’t understand this difference!

Back at that Shabbat table, I tried to clarify this point, but I was unsuccessful. I hope to clarify it “now”.

Actually, my desire to clarify this point “now” is a perfect example to use.

When I say that I want to clarify this point “now”, I don’t mean “now” literally. I mean that I hope to clarify it by the end of this d’var. Which really means that I hope to clarify it in the near future. By the time you’re done reading this, I hope that the point will be clear.

In fact, whenever anyone says that they want something “now”, what they really mean is that they want their “now” to change into a different “now”. They may want it really fast… but “fast” is still the future.

This is the exact opposite of “being in the now” or “being present”.

To “be in the now” doesn’t mean that you want a different “now”. It means you’re just being in thisnow. There’s no conflict or tension in that- you’re just present.

In fact, you are the present; there’s not you, on one hand, and the present on the other. When you are present, you and the present are the same thing.

So when that guy talked about Jacob and Esau, he wasn’t talking about long-term planning versus being in the now. He was really talking about long-term planning versus short-term planning. Neither one is about the “now” at all.

And yet, there’s a way in which long-term planning can actually can help you be fully present.

When you know exactly where you’re going, you’re less likely to worry about what you’re going to have for dinner in a few hours. It just doesn’t matter that much. You have a long-term plan, so you can fully enjoy the journey. You can be present.

That’s the way Joseph is in this week’s reading. At the opening of our parsha, it says that Joseph is Israel’s favorite son. This makes Israel’s other sons jealous of Joseph. Then, Joseph does something to further upset them:

Joseph dreamt a dream that he told to his brothers, and they hated him even more. He said to them, “Hear, if you please, this dream that I dreamt: Behold! We were binding sheaves in the middle of the field, when, behold! My sheaf arose and remained standing. Then, behold! Your sheaves gathered around and bowed to my sheaf.”

Then, as if that weren't bad enough, he really ticks them off with a second dream: The sun, moon and eleven stars all bowed down to him, implying that one day he would rule over his eleven brothers, father and mother.

Why was Joseph unconcerned about upsetting his brothers with these dreams? Some say that Joseph was immature and vain. But I don’t think so. People who are immature and vain tend to complain when bad things happen to them.

Not Joseph!

His brothers throw him in a pit and sell him into slavery. When he later rises to be the most trusted and powerful slave in the house of his master, he is framed and thrown in the dungeon. Through all these calamities, he never once complains, never once gets angry, never even defends himself.

Why?

Because he trusts his dream and he knows where he is going.

Since he knows where he’s going, he doesn’t have to fuss much about how he gets there. His brothers are mad at him? No big deal, it will work out. Sold into slavery? There’s an interesting turn.

Everything that happens to him is merely a modulation of the present moment. Whatever it is, he’s there with it. He sees the big picture, and therefore he’s fully in the now.

In fact, his name embodies this quality. The Hebrew for Joseph is Yosef, which comes from the root that means “to increase”. No matter how terrible life gets, he pops back and increases toward his goal. He’s like cream- always rising to the top, never growing anxious or complaining. He just rides the story of his life, moving steadily toward his destiny.

There’s a story that Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev saw a man hurrying down the street, bumping into things and knocking people over. The rabbi grabbed him and said, “Why are you rushing so?”

“I’m running to meet my destiny!” replied the man as he tried to break free from the rebbe’s grip.

“But how do you know that your destiny is in front of you?” argued the rebbe, “Perhaps it’s behind you, and all you have to do is slow down and let it catch up with you!”

On this Shabbat Vayieshev, the Shabbos of Dwelling, remember that to truly dwell in the Presence of the One who is only ever in the present, you don’t have to give up your dreams for the future. But, you don’t have to run after them either!

Instead, rest in the knowledge of where your ship is going- take the steps you need to move in that direction, then trust and enjoy the cruise, even when the world seems to be against you! And if you don’t know yet where you want to go, be present with the not knowing. In the silence, your dreams will reveal themselves.

Good Shabbos,
b yosef