## [Sweet Honey – YESOD and Parshat Vayeishev](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/sweet-honey-yesod-and-parshat-vayeishev)

The students of Reb Simkha Bunim decided to meet together regularly for learning and fellowship. When the master heard about this, he told them this story:

“Once, there was a man who wished to change careers so that he might make a better living. He investigated what types of work would earn him more, how expensive they would be to learn, how much time they would take, and so on. After some research, he decided he would start a business making mead.

So, he went into the city and found an expert mead brewer who could teach him the craft. He paid the man, learned with him for several weeks, and then returned home to launch his enterprise. After brewing up his first batch, he invited many friends and relatives to his home for a tasting party, hoping they would become customers and spread the word. But after pouring everyone a glass and inviting them to take a sip, they all recoiled in disgust!

“What is wrong?” he exclaimed.

“I don’t know,” someone said, “taste it – it seems really bitter!”

The man tried it and it was true, the mead was terrible. Embarrassed and enraged, he set off for the city once again, found his teacher, and demanded his money back. But the teacher insisted he must have done something wrong. “Did you do such-and-such properly?” The master mead brewer went through each step of the process, and the man said that he had done them all correctly.

“Hmm… maybe there was something wrong with the honey you used,” said the mead brewer.

“Honey?” said the man, “I didn’t use and honey.”

“No honey?? You fool – do I have to tell you everything? Of course you can’t make mead without the honey!!”

Reb Simkha Bunim then concluded to his students, “And that is how it must be for you. It is good to get together and learn, but you must remember to add a good amount of hasidic honey!”

The ninth of the Thirty-Two Paths is *Yesod,* which means “foundation.” What is the foundation of the spiritual life? It is that *hasidic honey –* it is joy, enjoyment, having a positive attitude – it is health of the spirit. On the physical level, it is also health of the body. Both are foundational not just for spirituality, but for any endeavor.

 In the Torah, *Yesod* is represented by Jacob’s beloved son, Joseph:

וְיִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל אָהַ֤ב אֶת־יוֹסֵף֙ מִכָּל־בָּנָ֔יו כִּֽי־בֶן־זְקֻנִ֥ים ה֖וּא ל֑וֹ וְעָ֥שָׂה ל֖וֹ כְּתֹ֥נֶת פַּסִּֽים׃

*Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him an ornamented tunic.*

וַיִּרְא֣וּ אֶחָ֗יו כִּֽי־אֹת֞וֹ אָהַ֤ב אֲבִיהֶם֙ מִכָּל־אֶחָ֔יו וַֽיִּשְׂנְא֖וּ אֹת֑וֹ וְלֹ֥א יָכְל֖וּ דַּבְּר֥וֹ לְשָׁלֹֽם׃

*And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him so that they could not speak a friendly word to him.*

וַיַּחֲלֹ֤ם יוֹסֵף֙ חֲל֔וֹם וַיַּגֵּ֖ד לְאֶחָ֑יו וַיּוֹסִ֥פוּ ע֖וֹד שְׂנֹ֥א אֹתֽוֹ׃

*Once Joseph had a dream which he told to his brothers; and they hated him even more…*

* Genesis 37:3-5

The Joseph story is characterized right from the beginning by the experience of both love and hate:

וְיִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל אָהַ֤ב אֶת־יוֹסֵף֙ – *V’Yisrael ahav et Yosef – And Israel loved Joseph…*

יוֹסֵף *Yosef* actually means “increase,” and this was Joseph’s characteristic – no matter what happened to him (and he truly had the hardest life out of any of the Biblical characters), he never let anything bother him. He was like cream, always rising to the top, no matter how much he was beaten down: He was almost killed and then sold into slavery by his brothers, and then he rose to be the most trusted servant in the house of a wealthy nobleman. Again, he was falsely accused of a crime and thrown into the dungeon, but eventually he was taken into the palace and made second only to Pharaoh. And through all his troubles, he never complains; he simply goes with what is happening.

יִשְׂרָאֵל *Yisrael* is Joseph’s father, who loves him the most. And just as Joseph is a symbol for the quality of success and not being beaten down by anything, so too “father” represents the Supreme Father, the Divine Source. After all, *Yisrael* can be read as *Yishar El,* “straight to the Divine.”

Seen in this way, his father Israel represents the vertical dimension of experience, Joseph’s relationship with the Source of Being. His brothers, however, represent the horizontal dimension – relationship with beings, with happenings in time, which express the exact opposite of the vertical dimension:

וַיּוֹסִ֥פוּ ע֖וֹד שְׂנֹ֥א אֹתֽוֹ – *vayosifu od s’no oto – and they increased even more their hatred of him…*

The word for “increase” here is a play on words: וַיּוֹסִ֥פוּ *vayosifu* is like the name *Yosef;* as *Yosef* increases, the hatred of his brothers also increases. The hint here is that as we grow and become successful in something, there are often “haters.” People will try to tear you down. And even when this is not the case, there are new challenges that emerge as we become more and more successful at something.

The key, then, is to be like *Yosef.* He wasn’t bothered by the difficulties of the horizontal dimension, because he was rooted in the vertical dimension:

וְיִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל אָהַ֤ב אֶת־יוֹסֵף֙ – *V’Yisrael ahav et Yosef – And Israel loved Joseph…*

He trusted in his “dream,” his vision that he was given for the future; he had a purpose, and so it didn’t matter to him *how* that purpose would be fulfilled. So too, we can receive this moment as it unfolds from the “hands of God” so to speak; we can know that the same Reality from which we are created is expressing Itself in every happening. Our very existence and our very journey in this life is Grace, an expression of Love.

*Yesod* and *Yosef* are also associated with sanctified sexuality:

וַיְמָאֵ֓ן וַיְהִ֗י אַחַר֙ הַדְּבָרִ֣ים הָאֵ֔לֶּה וַתִּשָּׂ֧א אֵֽשֶׁת־אֲדֹנָ֛יו אֶת־עֵינֶ֖יהָ אֶל־יוֹסֵ֑ף וַתֹּ֖אמֶר שִׁכְבָ֥ה עִמִּֽי׃

*After a time, his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, “Lie with me.” But he refused…*

* Genesis 39:7

When Joseph’s master’s wife makes advances, he doesn’t succumb to temptation. She then accuses him of making advances on her, and he is thrown in the dungeon, but he doesn’t complain. Instead, he is eventually put in charge of all the other prisoners! For these reasons, *Yosef* is also called *HaTzadik,* “righteous one,” both because he can’t be seduced into improper sexuality, and because he trusts that “things are unfolding as they should.” This association with sanctified sexuality also connects *Yesod* with *brit milah,* the practice of circumcision as the sign of covenant with the Divine.

The “Saying of Creation” associated with *Yesod* connects to the aspect of life and procreation:

וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אֱלֹהִ֗ים תּוֹצֵ֨א הָאָ֜רֶץ נֶ֤פֶשׁ חַיָּה֙ לְמִינָ֔הּ

Elohim *said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind…*

* Genesis 1:24

And, the imperative from the *Aseret Hadibrot,* The Ten Commandments, relates to the aspect of sanctified sexuality:

לֹא תִּנְאָֽף – *Lo tinaf – don’t commit adultery*

By contrast, Joseph’s brother Judah expresses the opposite qualities. After the devastating incident of selling their brother Joseph into slavery, Judah leaves the family for some time, marries a woman and has three sons. The eldest marries a woman named Tamar, and he dies soon after. Then next son then marries Tamar, but he dies too. So, Judah withholds his third son from Tamar, fearing he will die as well.

But, Tamar doesn’t want to be childless, so she disguises herself as a prostitute and waits for Judah by the crossroads. When he sees her, he stops and asks to be her customer:

 …וַיֵּ֨ט אֵלֶ֜יהָ אֶל־הַדֶּ֗רֶךְ וַיֹּ֙אמֶר֙ הָֽבָה־נָּא֙ אָב֣וֹא אֵלַ֔יִךְ כִּ֚י לֹ֣א יָדַ֔ע כִּ֥י כַלָּת֖וֹ הִ֑וא

*So he turned aside to her by the road and said, “Please, let me come to you”— for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law…*

* Genesis 38:16

He cannot pay her anything, so he gives her his staff and signet as a pledge to hold while he goes and sends her a goat. Later, when he sends the goat, the messenger returns back with the goat, saying he could not find any prostitute by the crossroads.

Three months later, Judah is told that his daughter in law has been promiscuous and his now pregnant, to which Judah demands that she be taken out and burned! Tamar coolly holds up the staff and the signet, and says that the father of the child in her womb is the their owner. Judah realizes his folly, and in his embarrassment, he takes responsibility for the whole situation. This is the beginning of Judah’s transformation, which culminates in the next *parshah.*

On a symbolic level, *Yehudah* and *Yosef*  are archetypes of opposite qualities:

*Yosef* is described as looking after his brothers. In Genesis 37:2, it says that Joseph was a shepherd with his brothers, but it can also be read that he was a shepherd *toward* his brothers – יוֹסֵ֞ף ... הָיָ֨ה רֹעֶ֤ה אֶת־אֶחָיו֙

*Yehudah,* on the other hand, *sells* his brother, as in Genesis 37:26, *“What do we gain by killing our brother and covering up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites…”*

*Yosef* maintains integrity and doesn’t succumb to the temptation of his master’s wife, but is then humiliated wrongfully when he is thrown in prison. *Yehudah* does succumb to the temptation of Tamar, and is then humiliated *rightfully*, meaning, his humiliation humbles him and begins his transformation.

*Yosef* ends up with great power in the end when he becomes like a king, second only to Pharaoh, and *Yehudah* ends up having to humble himself before *Yosef* to get food and not starve to death.

These two opposite archetypes of *Yosef* and *Yehudah* manifest in the tradition that there will one day be *two* messiahs, one that will come from Joseph*,* and one that will come from Judah*.* The more commonly known messiah legend is the one from Judah, and it has its origins in this *parshah,* when Tamar, who was impregnated by Judah, is about to give birth:

וַיְהִ֖י בְּעֵ֣ת לִדְתָּ֑הּ וְהִנֵּ֥ה תְאוֹמִ֖ים בְּבִטְנָֽהּ׃

*When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb!*

וַיְהִ֥י בְלִדְתָּ֖הּ וַיִּתֶּן־יָ֑ד וַתִּקַּ֣ח הַמְיַלֶּ֗דֶת וַתִּקְשֹׁ֨ר עַל־יָד֤וֹ שָׁנִי֙ לֵאמֹ֔ר זֶ֖ה יָצָ֥א רִאשֹׁנָֽה׃

*While she was in labor, one of them put out his hand, and the midwife tied a crimson thread on that hand, to signify: This one came out first.*

וַיְהִ֣י ׀ כְּמֵשִׁ֣יב יָד֗וֹ וְהִנֵּה֙ יָצָ֣א אָחִ֔יו וַתֹּ֕אמֶר מַה־פָּרַ֖צְתָּ עָלֶ֣יךָ פָּ֑רֶץ וַיִּקְרָ֥א שְׁמ֖וֹ פָּֽרֶץ׃

*But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, “What a breach you have made for yourself!” So he was named Perez.*

וְאַחַר֙ יָצָ֣א אָחִ֔יו אֲשֶׁ֥ר עַל־יָד֖וֹ הַשָּׁנִ֑י וַיִּקְרָ֥א שְׁמ֖וֹ זָֽרַח׃

*Afterward his brother came out, on whose hand was the crimson thread; he was named Zerah.*

* Genesis 38:27-30

Perez, or *Paretz,* begins the line from which comes King David, and King David begins the dynasty of kings which, according to legend, will one day be restored by *Moshiakh ben David,* the “Messiah son of David.”

The legend of *Moshiakh ben Yosef* is found in the Talmud:

ויראני ה' ארבעה חרשים מאן נינהו ארבעה חרשים אמר רב חנא בר ביזנא אמר רבי שמעון חסידא משיח בן דוד ומשיח בן יוסף ואליהו וכהן צדק

*“The Divine then showed me four craftsmen” (Zechariah 2:3). Who are these four craftsmen? Rav Ḥana bar Bizna said that Rabbi Shimon Ḥasida said: They are Messiah ben David, Messiah ben Yosef, Elijah, and the righteous High Priest…*

* BT, Sukkah 52a

According to this legend, *Moshiakh ben Yosef* will come first at the “end of days” and fight the wars of Armageddon to prepare the way for *Moshiakh ben David,* who will usher in a new era of world peace.

What does this all mean?

Joseph and Judah, *Yesod* and *Hod,* really point to the two basic aspects of our being:

*Yosef HaTzadik* is our deepest being. It is our capacity to recover from anything that might happen and return to positivity, to the basic vibrant goodness of being, which is the quality of our foundational life energy – this is *Yesod,* the power of consciousness that is eternal renewal and youthfulness, ever available to heal all wounds, to effect peace and *tikun*.

*Yehudah,* on the other hand, is our ordinary personhood; it is the one who makes mistakes again and again, with the capacity to be humbled and ultimately transformed by the process. This is the *Baal Teshuvah,* the one who repents,represented by *Hod* which is humility and gratitude (as expressed by Judah toward Joseph in next week’s reading).

And this is the dynamic between these two levels within us – as the personal dimension of Judah – our body, personality, feelings and thoughts – humbles itself and opens to the deepest transpersonal dimension of Joseph – the luminescent field of awareness that we are on the deepest most essential level, then “Joseph can feed Judah.” Meaning, our Divine essence can shine within and express itself through our personhood, bringing healing and redemption on all levels. This is the birth of *Moshiakh* within, and both the shining *Yosef* and the imperfect but growing *Yehudah* are essential for this process…

***More on Vayeishev...***

[**The Whole World in Her Hands! Parshat Vayeishev**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/the-whole-world-in-her-hands-parshat-vayeishev)12/16/2019 [0 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/the-whole-world-in-her-hands-parshat-vayeishev#comments)

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:

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)

**​**[**Just Say Yes! Parshat Vayeishev**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/just-say-yes-parshat-vayeishev)
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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)12/22/2016  [2 Comments

​](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-evil-shepherd%22%20%5Cl%20%22comments)​​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)12/2/2015  [0 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/being-now-wanting-now-parshat-vayeishev#comments)

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