

Torah in Motion: Parshat Vayeshev
Yosef: The Long Road to Success

I. Outlining the story:

לז	Yosef and his brothers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings evil reports • Favored son/given coat • 2 dreams <p>Plot to kill Yosef, he is sold to Egypt</p>
לח	Yehuda and Tamar
לט	Yosef in Potifar's house, rises to success Incident with Eshet Potifar Jail, rises to success
מ	Dreams of cupbearer and chief baker, Yosef interprets Cupbearer released, forgets Yosef
מא	Pharaoh's dreams, Yosef called to interpret Yosef's interpretations Yosef rise to power, second in command of Egypt Stores grain
מב	Famine, brothers head to Egypt, encounter Joseph Yosef accuses them of being spies, imprisons them Keeps one brothers, sends others back (with their money), until they bring Binyamin
מג	Brothers convince Ya'akov, return with Binyamin
מד	Brothers leave Egypt, stopped and goblet found in Binyamin's bag Yehuda's speech to protect Binyamin
מה	Yosef reveals himself. Brothers return and tell Ya'akov

II. Introduction and Dreams:

<p>1. Breishit 37: 1-11 (1) Now Jacob was settled in the land where his father had sojourned, the land of Canaan. (2) This, then, is the line of Jacob: At seventeen years of age, Joseph tended the flocks with his brothers, <u>as a helper to the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah.</u></p>	<p>1. בראשית לז: א-יא (א) וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִגְדוֹר אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: (ב) אֵלֶּה תִּלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בְּרִשְׁבַּע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה הָיָה רְעָה אֶת־אָחִיו בְּצֹאן וְהוּא נָעַר אֶת־בְּנֵי בְלָהָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה נְשֵׁי אָבִיו וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת־דִּבְתָּם רְעָה אֶל־אֲבִיהֶם: (ג) וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶהֱבֵ אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִכָּל־בְּנָיו כִּי־בְרִזְקָנִים הוּא לּוֹ וַעֲשָׂה לּוֹ כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים: (ד)</p>
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And Joseph brought bad reports of them to their father. (3) Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons—he was his child of old age; and he had made him a coat of many colors (4) 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. (5) Once Joseph had a dream which he told to his brothers; and they hated him even more. (6) He said to them, “Hear this dream which I have dreamed: (7) There we were binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf stood up and remained upright; then your sheaves gathered around and bowed low to my sheaf.” (8) His brothers answered, “Do you mean to reign over us? Do you mean to rule over us?” And they hated him even more for his talk about his dreams. (9) He dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers, saying, “Look, I have had another dream: And this time, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” (10) And when he told it to his father and brothers, his father berated him. “What,” he said to him, “is this dream you have dreamed? Are we to come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow low to you to the ground?” (11) So his brothers were wrought up at him, and his father kept the matter in mind.

ויראו אחיו כי־אתו אהב אביהם מכל־אחיו וישנאו אתו ולא יכלו דברו לשלם: (ה) ויחלם יוסף חלום ויגד לאחיו ויוספו עוד שְנָא אתו: (ו) ויאמר אליהם שמעו־נָא החלום הזה אשר חלמתי: (ז) והנה אנחנו מאלמים אלמים בתוך השדה והנה קמה אלמתי וגם־נצבה והנה תסבינה אלמתיכם ותשתחוין לאלמתי: (ח) ויאמרו לו אחיו המלך תמלך עלינו אם־משול תמשל בנו ויוספו עוד שְנָא אתו על־חלמתי ועל־דבריו: (ט) ויחלם עוד חלום אחר ויספר אתו לאחיו ויאמר הנה חלמתי חלום עוד והנה השמש והירח ואחד עשר כוכבים משתחוים לי: (י) ויספר אל־אביו ואל־אחיו ויגער־בו אביו ויאמר לו מה החלום הזה אשר חלמת הבוא נבוא אני ואמך ואחייך להשתחות לך ארצה: (יא) ויקנאו־בו אחיו ואביו שמר את־הדבר:

2. Rashi, Breishit 37:2

AND HE, BEING A LAD — His actions were childish: he dressed his hair, he touched up his eyes so that he should appear good-looking (Genesis Rabbah 84:7).

2. רש"י, בראשית לז:ב

והוא נער. שהיה עושה מעשה נערות, מתקן בשעריו, ממשמש בעיניו, כדי שיהיה נראה יפה:

3. Ramban, Breishit 37:10

Alternatively, the meaning of the rebuke may be: “How dare you dream such a dream? It is but your conceit and youth that bring up such matters in your heart,” just as it says concerning dreams, *Thy thoughts came upon thy bed; And imaginings upon my bed.*

3. רמב"ן, בראשית לז:י

...או טעם הגערה לומר איך נשאך לבך לחלום החלום הזה אין זה כי אם גובה לב ונערות שיעלו דברים כאלו על לבבך כענין שנאמר בחלומות (דניאל ב כט) רעיונך על משכבך סליקו וכתוב (שם ד ב) והרהורין על משכבי:

4. Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch, Commentary on Breishit, 37: 7

It is remarkable that he should have dreamt of binding sheaves. That was something with which ordinarily they had no connection, for they were shepherds. To become an agricultural people stood for them still as their destiny in the distant future. If agriculture was so much in his mind that he even dreamt of it, the brothers were justified in thinking that could only be due to the teaching and information given to him by his father Israel over the expected national destiny of the house. All the more then, could the brothers believe themselves justified in saying; Will you indeed in the future be king over us, or perhaps even now already rule over us? (v. 8) Such a thought should not occur even in a dream!"

III. Yosef and the Mystery Man**5. Breishit 37: 12-17**

(12) One time, when his brothers had gone to pasture their father's flock at Shechem, (13) Israel said to Joseph, "Your brothers are pasturing at Shechem. Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "I am ready." (14) And he said to him, "Go and see how your brothers are and how the flocks are faring, and bring me back word." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron. When he reached Shechem, (15) a man came upon him wandering in the fields. The man asked him, "What are you looking for?" (16) He answered, "I am looking for my brothers. Could you tell me where they are pasturing?" (17) The man said, "They have gone from here, for I heard them say: Let us go to Dothan." So Joseph followed his brothers and found them at Dothan.

5. בראשית לז: יב-יז

(יב) וַיֵּלְכוּ אֶחָיו לְרֹעוֹת אֶת־צֹאן אֲבֵיהֶם בְּשֶׁכֶם:
 (יג) וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יוֹסֵף הֲלוֹא אֶחָיִךְ רְעִים
 בְּשֶׁכֶם לָכֵה וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֵלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הֲנִנִּי: (יד)
 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֹךְ־נָא רֵאֵה אֶת־שְׁלוֹם אֶחָיִךְ וְאֶת־שְׁלוֹם
 הַצֹּאן וְהַשְׁבָּנִי דָּבַר וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ מֵעֵמֶק חֶבְרוֹן וַיָּבֹא
 שְׁכֵמָה: (טו) וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ אִישׁ וְהָנָה תַּעֲהָ בַשָּׂדֶה
 וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר מַה־תִּבְקֵשׁ: (טז) וַיֹּאמֶר
 אֶת־אֶחָי אֲנֹכִי מִבְּקֵשׁ הַגִּידֶה־נָּא לִי אֵיפֹה הֵם
 רְעִים: (יז) וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ נָסְעוּ מִזֶּה כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי
 אֲמָרִים נֹלְכֵה דְתִינָה וַיֵּלֶךְ יוֹסֵף אַחֲרָם וַיִּמְצָאֵם
 בְּדוֹתָן:

6. Ramban, Breishit 37:15

AND A MAN FOUND HIM, AND BEHOLD, HE WAS STRAYING IN THE FIELD. The verse is stating that Joseph was straying from the road, not knowing where to go, and he entered a field since he was looking for them in a place of pasture. Scripture mentions this at length in order to relate that many events befell him which could properly have caused him to return, but he endured everything patiently for the honor of his father...

6. רמב"ן בראשית לז: טו

וימצאהו איש והנה תעה בשדה יאמר כי הוא תועה מן הדרך ולא היה יודע אנה ילך ונכנס בשדה כי במקום המרעה היה מבקש אותם ויאריך הכתוב בזה להגיד כי סיבות רבות באו אליו שהיה ראוי לחזור לו אבל הכל סבל לכבוד אביו...

IV. The sale:

7. Breishit 37:18-34

(18) They saw him from afar, and before he came close to them they conspired to kill him. (19) They said to one another, "Here comes that dreamer! (20) Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we can say, 'A savage beast devoured him.' We shall see what comes of his dreams!" (21) But when Reuben heard it, he tried to save him from them. He said, "Let us not take his life." (22) And Reuben went on, "Shed no blood! Cast him into that pit out in the wilderness, but do not touch him yourselves"—intending to save him from them and restore him to his father. (23) When Joseph came up to his brothers, they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the ornamented tunic that he was wearing, (24) and took him and cast him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. (25) Then they sat down to a meal. Looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, their camels bearing gum, balm, and ladanum to be taken to Egypt. (26) Then Judah said to his brothers, "What do we gain by killing our brother and covering up his blood? (27) Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, but let us not do away with him ourselves. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh." His brothers agreed. (28) When Midianite traders passed by, they pulled Joseph up out of the pit. They sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who brought Joseph to Egypt. (29) When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he rent his clothes. (30) Returning to his brothers, he said, "The boy is gone! Now, what am I to do?" (31) Then they took Joseph's tunic, slaughtered a kid, and dipped the tunic in the blood. (32) They had the ornamented tunic taken to their father, and they said, "We found this. Please examine it; is it your son's tunic or not?" (33) He recognized it, and said, "My son's tunic! A savage beast devoured him! Joseph was torn by a beast!" (34) Jacob rent his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins, and observed mourning for his son many days.

7. בראשית לז: יח-לד

(יח) ויראו אתו מרחק ובטרם יקרב אליהם ויתנכלו אתו להמיתו: (יט) ויאמרו איש אל אחיו הנה בעל החלמות הלזה בא: (כ) ועתה ו לכו ונהרגו ונשלכה באחד הבורות ואמרנו חיה רעה אכלתהו ונראה מה יהיו חלמתיו: (כא) וישמע ראובן ויצלהו מידם ויאמר לא נכנו נפש: (כב) ויאמר אלהם ו ראובן אל תשפכו דם השליכו אתו אל הבור הזה אשר במדבר ויד אל תשלחו בו למען הציל אתו מידם להשיבו אל אביו: (כג) ויהי כאשר בא יוסף אל אחיו ויפשיטו את יוסף את כתנתו את כתנת הפסים אשר עליו: (כד) ויקחהו וישלכו אתו הבור והבור רק אין בו מים: (כה) וישבו לאכל לחם וישאו עיניהם ויראו והנה ארחת ישמעאלים באה מגלעד וגמליהם נשאים נכאת וצרי ולט הולכים להוריד מצרימה: (כו) ויאמר יהודה אל אחיו מה בצע כי נהרג את אחינו וכסינו את דמו: (כז) לכו ונמכרנו לישמעאלים וידנו אל תהייבו כיראחינו בשרנו הוא וישמעו אחיו: (כח) ויעברו אנשים מדינים סחרים וימשכו ויעלו את יוסף מן הבור וימכרו את יוסף לישמעאלים בעשרים כסף ויביאו את יוסף מצרימה: (כט) וישב ראובן אל הבור והנה אין יוסף בבור ויקרע את בגדיו: (ל) וישב אל אחיו ויאמר הילד איננו ואני אנה אני בא: (לא) ויקחו את כתנת יוסף וישחטו שער עזים ויטבלו את הכתנת בדם: (לב) וישלחו את כתנת הפסים ויביאו אל אביהם ויאמרו זאת מצאנו הכרנא הכתנת בנך הוא אמר לא: (לג) ויכירה ויאמר כתנת בני חיה רעה אכלתהו טרף טרף יוסף: (לד) ויקרע יעקב שמלתיו וישם שק במתניו ויתאבל על בנו ימים רבים:

8. Abarbanel, Breishit 37:3

...that the sons of Ya'akov thought when they saw their father loved Yosef over all his sons, that he would be the main inheritor and receive the birthright, as he was the oldest son to Ya'akov's beloved. And they would be like the sons of the concubines, that just as Avraham chose Yitzchak over his other sons, and Yitzchak chose Ya'akov to inherit the blessings, and Esav was sent away to Mt. Seir, so too, their father would have Yosef inherit the blessings and the holy land, and they would be rejected.

8. אברבנאל, בראשית לז:ג

...שבני יעקב חשבו בראותם שאת יוסף אהב אביהם מכל בניו עלה בלבם כי הוא היה עקר הבית ויורש עזר ולו משפט הבכורה כי הוא הבן הבכור לאהובה. ושהיו כלם בערכו כבני הפלגשים וחשבו כי כמו שאברהם עשה עקר כל בניו מיצחק ויצחק עשה יעקב עקר הבית ויורש הברכות ונחלת הארץ ועשו נדחה אל הר שעיר. ככה בבית יעקב אביהם אחד יהיה היורש הברכות ונחלת הארץ הקדושה והוא יהיה יוסף והמה ידחו מעליו ...

9. Rashbam, Breishit 37:28

While the brothers had been sitting down to consume their meal, having distanced themselves somewhat from the pit into which they had thrown Joseph in order not to be guilty of "eating while spilling blood," they were waiting for the Ishmaelites whom they had seen in the distance, to arrive. During this period the Midianites, coming from a different direction had passed there, saw Joseph in the pit, pulled him up, and proceeded to sell him to the Ishmaelites. One may assume that the brothers had no knowledge of this. Even though the Torah appears to attribute the sale of Joseph to the Ishmaelites to the brothers, (based on Joseph accusing them of having sold him to Egypt, 45,4) we would have to say that because of their having been instrumental in bringing about that sale they are considered as if having assisted in that sale. This appears to me the deeper meaning of the plain meaning of the text both here and in chapter 45.

9. רשב"ם, בראשית לז:כח

ויעברו אנשים מדינים - ובתוך שהיו יושבים לאכול לחם ורחוקים היו קצת מן הבור לבלתי אכול על הדם וממתנינים היו לישמעאלים שראו וקודם שבאו הישמעאלים עברו אנשים מדינים אחרים דרך שם וראוהו בבור ומשכוהו ומכרוהו המדיינים לישמעאלים. ויש לומר: שהאחים לא ידעו ואף על פי שכתוב אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה. יש לומר: שהגרמת מעשיהם סייעה במכירתו. זה נראה לי לפי עומק דרך פשוטו של מקרא. כי ויעברו אנשים מדינים משמע ע"י מקרה והם מכרוהו לישמעאלים. ואף אם באתה לומר וימכרו את יוסף לישמעאלים כי אחיו מכרוהו, אם כן צריך לומר שהם ציוו למדינים סוחרים למושכו מן הבור, ואח"כ מכרוהו לישמעאלים.

V. The Journey: Potifar's House**10. Breishit 39**

(1) When Joseph was taken down to Egypt, Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh and his prefect bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. (2) ה' was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he

10. בראשית לט

(א) ויוסף הורד מצרימה ויקנהו פוטיפר סרִיס פֶרְעָה שֶׁר הַטִּבְחִים אִישׁ מִצְרֵי מִיַּד הַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵלִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹרְדוּהוּ שָׁמָּה: (ב) וַיְהִי ה' אִתּוֹ יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אִישׁ מַצְלִיחַ וַיְהִי בְּבֵית אֲדֹנָיו הַמִּצְרִי: (ג) וַיֵּרָא אֲדֹנָיו כִּי ה' אִתּוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-הוּא עֹשֶׂה ה' מַצְלִיחַ בְּיָדוֹ: (ד)

stayed in the house of his Egyptian master. (3) And when his master saw that ה' was with him and that ה' lent success to everything he undertook, (4) he took a liking to Joseph. He made him his personal attendant and put him in charge of his household, placing in his hands all that he owned. (5) And from the time that the Egyptian put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, ה' blessed his house for Joseph's sake, so that the blessing of ה' was upon everything that he owned, in the house and outside. (6) He left all that he had in Joseph's hands and, with him there, he paid attention to nothing save the food that he ate. Now Joseph was well built and handsome. (7) After a time, his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, "Lie with me." (8) But he refused. He said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master gives no thought to anything in this house, and all that he owns he has placed in my hands. (9) He wields no more authority in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except yourself, since you are his wife. How then could I do this most wicked thing, and sin before God?" (10) And much as she coaxed Joseph day after day, he did not yield to her request to lie beside her, to be with her. (11) One such day, he came into the house to do his work. None of the household being there inside, (12) she caught hold of him by his garment and said, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand and got away and fled outside. (13) When she saw that he had left it in her hand and had fled outside, (14) she called out to her servants and said to them, "Look, he had to bring us a Hebrew to dally with us! This one came to lie with me; but I screamed loud. (15) And when he heard me screaming at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and got away and fled outside." ..

...(20) So Joseph's master had him put in prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. But even while he was there in prison, (21) ה' was with Joseph—extending kindness to him and disposing the chief jailer

וימצא יוסף חן בעיניו וישרת אתו ויפקדהו על־ביתו וכל־ישֶׁלו נתן בְּיָדוֹ: (ה) וַיְהִי מֵאֵז הַפְּקִיד אֹתוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ וְעַל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁוּלוּ וַיְבָרֶךְ ה' אֶת־בֵּית הַמִּצְרִי בְּגַלְל יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי בְרַכְתָּהּ בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁוּלוּ בְּבֵית וּבְשָׂדֶה: (ו) וַיַּעֲזֹב כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ בְּיַד־יוֹסֵף וְלֹא־יָדַע אֶתֹּו מֵאוֹמֶה כִּי אִם־הִלָּחֵם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא אוֹכֵל וַיְהִי יוֹסֵף יַפְה־תָּאֵר וַיִּפֶּה מְרֹאֶה: (ז) וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַתִּשָּׂא אֶשֶׁת־אֲדֹנָיו אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ אֶל־יוֹסֵף וַתֹּאמֶר שִׁכְבָה עִמִּי: (ח) וַיִּמָּאֵן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־אֶשֶׁת אֲדֹנָיו הֲוֹ אֲדֹנִי לֹא־יָדַע אֶתִּי מִה־בְּבֵית וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־יֵשׁוּלוּ נָתַן בְּיַדִּי: (ט) אֵינְנִי גְדוֹל בְּבֵית הַזֶּה מִמְּנִי וְלֹא־חָשַׁךְ מִמְּנִי מֵאוֹמֶה כִּי אִם־אוֹתָךְ בְּאֶשֶׁר אֶת־אֶשְׁתֹּו וְאִיךָ אֶעֱשֶׂה הֲרַעָה הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת וְחָטָאתִי לְאֱלֹקִים: (י) וַיְהִי כְּדַבְּרָה אֶל־יוֹסֵף יוֹם וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֲלֶיהָ לְשִׁכְבַּ אִצְלָהּ לְהִיּוֹת עִמָּה: (יא) וַיְהִי כִּהְיוּם הַזֶּה וַיָּבֵא הַבַּיִתָּה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלֹאכְתָּו וְאִין אִישׁ מֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַבַּיִת שֵׁם בְּבֵית: (יב) וַתִּתְפָּשֶׂהוּ בְּבַגְדוֹ לֵאמֹר שִׁכְבָה עִמִּי וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ בְּיָדָהּ וַיֵּנֶס וַיֵּצֵא הַחוּצָה: (יג) וַיְהִי כִּרְאוּתָהּ כִּי־עָזַב בְּגָדוֹ בְּיָדָהּ וַיֵּנֶס הַחוּצָה: (יד) וַתִּקְרָא לְאֲנָשֵׁי בֵיתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לֵאמֹר רְאוּ הֵבִיא לָנוּ אִישׁ עֲבָרִי לַצַּחֲקָ בָּנוּ בָּא אֵלַי לְשִׁכְבַּ עִמִּי וְאֶקְרָא בְּקוֹל גְּדוֹל: (טו) וַיְהִי כִשְׁמַעוּ כִּי־הִרִמְתִּי קוֹלִי וְאֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ אֶצְלִי וַיֵּנֶס וַיֵּצֵא הַחוּצָה:

(כ) וַיִּקְרָה אֲדוּשֵׁם יוֹסֵף אֹתוֹ וַיִּתְּנֶהוּ אֶל־בֵּית הַסְּהָר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־[אֶסְרִי] (אסורי) הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲסוּרִים וַיְהִי־שָׁם בְּבֵית הַסְּהָר: (כא) וַיְהִי ה' אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיֵּט אֵלָיו חֶסֶד וַיִּתֵּן חֲנּוּ בְּעֵינָיו שֶׁר בֵּית־הַסְּהָר: (כב) וַיִּתֵּן שֶׁר בֵּית־הַסְּהָר בְּיַד־יוֹסֵף אֶת כָּל־הָאֲסוּרִים אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית הַסְּהָר וְאֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עֹשִׂים שָׁם הוּא הָיָה עֹשֶׂה: (כג) אִין וְשֶׁר בֵּית־הַסְּהָר רָאָה אֶת־כָּל־מֵאוֹמֶה בְּיָדוֹ בְּאֶשֶׁר ה' אֹתוֹ וְאֲשֶׁר־הוּא עֹשֶׂה ה' מִצְּלִיחַ:

favorably toward him. (22) The chief jailer put in Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in that prison, and he was the one to carry out everything that was done there. (23) The chief jailer did not supervise anything that was in Joseph's, because ה' was with him, and whatever he did ה' made successful.

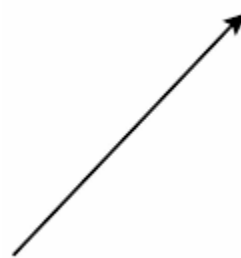
11. Rashi, Breishit 39:6

AND JOSEPH WAS OF BEAUTIFUL FORM – As soon as he saw that he was ruler (in the house) he began to eat and drink and curl his hair. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "Your father is mourning and you curl your hair! I will let a bear loose against you" (Midrash Tanchuma, Vayeshev 8), immediately.

11. רש"י בראשית לט:ו

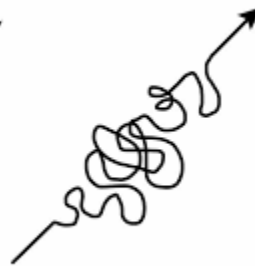
ויהי יוסף יפה תואר. כיון שראה עצמו מושל, התחיל אוכל ושותה ומסלסל בשער, אמר הקב"ה אביך מתאבל ואתה מסלסל בשערך, אני מגרה בך את הדב, מיד:

SUCCESS



what people think
it looks like

SUCCESS



what it really
looks like

VI. Jail and Interpreting Dreams:

12. Breishit 40: 6-23

(6) When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were distraught. (7) He asked Pharaoh's courtiers, who were with him in custody in his master's house, saying, "Why do you appear downcast today?" (8) And they said to him, "We had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." So Joseph said to them, "Surely God can interpret! Tell me [your dreams]." (9) Then the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph. He said to him, "In my dream, there was a vine in front of me. (10) On the vine were three branches.

12. בראשית מ: ו-כג

(ו) ויבא אליהם יוסף בבקר וירא אתם והנם זעפים: (ז) וישאל את סריסי פרעה אשר אתו במשמר בית אדניו לאמר מדוע פניכם רעים היום: (ח) ויאמרו אליו חלום חלמנו ופותר אין אתו ויאמר אלהם יוסף הלוא לאלקים פתרנים ספרו נא לי: (ט) ויספר שר המשקים את חלמו ליוסף ויאמר לו בחלומי והנה גפן לפני: (י) ובגפן שלשה שריגים והוא כפרחת עלתה נצה הבשילו אשכלתיה ענבים: (יא) וכוס פרעה בידי ואקח את הענבים ואשחט אתם אל כוס פרעה ואתו את הכוס על כף פרעה: (יב) ויאמר לו יוסף זה פתרנו שלשת השרגים שלשת ימים הם: (יג)

It had barely budded, when out came its blossoms and its clusters ripened into grapes. (11) Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand." (12) Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: The three branches are three days. (13) In three days Pharaoh will pardon you and restore you to your post; you will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand, as was your custom formerly when you were his cupbearer. (14) But think of me when all is well with you again, and do me the kindness of mentioning me to Pharaoh, so as to free me from this place. (15) For in truth, I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews; nor have I done anything here that they should have put me in the dungeon." (16) When the chief baker saw how favorably he had interpreted, he said to Joseph, "In my dream, similarly, there were three openwork baskets on my head. (17) In the uppermost basket were all kinds of food for Pharaoh that a baker prepares; and the birds were eating it out of the basket above my head." (18) Joseph answered, "This is its interpretation: The three baskets are three days. (19) In three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and impale you upon a pole; and the birds will pick off your flesh." (20) On the third day—his birthday—Pharaoh made a banquet for all his officials, and he singled out his chief cupbearer and his chief baker from among his officials. (21) He restored the chief cupbearer to his cupbearing, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand; (22) but the chief baker he impaled—just as Joseph had interpreted to them. (23) Yet the chief cupbearer did not think of Joseph; he forgot him.

בְּעוֹד וְשִׁלְשֵׁת יָמִים יִשָּׂא פְרֻעָה אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ וְהִשִּׁיבָהּ
עַל־כַּנְּךָ וְנִתְּתָ כוֹס־פְּרֻעָה בְּיָדוֹ כַּמִּשְׁפָּט הָרִאשׁוֹן
אֲשֶׁר הָיִיתָ מִשְׁקֵהוּ: (יד) כִּי אִם־זָכַרְתָּנִי אִתְּךָ כֹּאשֶׁר
יֵיטֵב לְךָ וְעָשִׂיתָ־נָא עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וְהִזְכַּרְתָּנִי אֶל־פְּרֻעָה
וְהוֹצֵאתָנִי מִן־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה: (טו) כִּי־גִנַּב גִּנַּבְתִּי מֵאֲרֻץ
הָעִבְרִים וְגַם־פָּה לֹא־עָשִׂיתִי מֵאוֹמָה כִּי־שָׂמוּ אֹתִי
בַּבּוֹר: (טז) וַיֵּרָא שְׁרֵי־הָאֲפִים כִּי טוֹב פָּתַר וַיֹּאמֶר
אֶל־יוֹסֵף אֶרְאֶנִּי בְּחִלּוּמֵי וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה סְלֵי חֲרִי
עַל־רֹאשִׁי: (יז) וּבְסֵל הָעֲלִיוֹן מִכָּל מֵאֲכָל פְּרֻעָה
מִעֲשָׂה אֶפְהָ וְהָעוֹף אֲכָל אֹתָם מִן־הַסֵּל מֵעַל רֹאשִׁי:
(יח) וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר זֶה פִּתְרֹנִי שְׁלֹשֶׁת הַסֵּלִים
שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים הֵם: (יט) בְּעוֹד וְשִׁלְשֵׁת יָמִים יִשָּׂא
פְּרֻעָה אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ מֵעַלֶיךָ וְתָלָה אֹתְךָ עַל־עֵץ וְאָכַל
הָעוֹף אֶת־בְּשָׂרְךָ מֵעַלֶיךָ: (כ) וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי
יוֹם הַלְדֹת אֶת־פְּרֻעָה וַיַּעַשׂ מִשְׁתָּה לְכָל־עַבְדָּיו
וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ וְשָׂר הַמִּשְׁקִים וְאֶת־רֹאשׁ שְׂרֵי
הָאֲפִים בְּתוֹךְ עַבְדָּיו: (כא) וַיָּשָׁב אֶת־שְׂרֵי הַמִּשְׁקִים
עַל־מִשְׁקֵהוּ וַיִּיתְּנוּ הַכּוֹס עַל־כַּף פְּרֻעָה: (כב) וְאֶת־שְׂרֵי
הָאֲפִים תָּלָה כֹּאשֶׁר פָּתַר לָהֶם יוֹסֵף: (כג) וְלֹא־זָכַר
שְׂרֵי־הַמִּשְׁקִים אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁכַּחְהוּ:

13. Rabbi Yitzchak Arama, Akeidat Yitzchak:
...but Joseph was influenced in his interpretation by the past case history of the dreamers, their status at court, and the difference between the crimes for which they were sentenced, marking one for pardon and

13. ר' יצחק עראמה, בספרו עקדת יצחק:
...אמנם נמשך יוסף בפתרון החלומות אחר מה שקדם לו מהכרתם, ובהתחלפות שררתם והקורבה אשר להם אצל המלך, ומהבדל החטאים אשר עליהם נתפסו, וגזר זה למחילה וזה לצליבה... הרי נתבאר שמהשערת הפתרון

the other for perdition. We see the evaluation of the interpretation is determined by the appraisal of the dreamer. (Translation: Nehama Leibowitz)

הוא הכרת החולם.

14. Abarbanel, Breishit 40:1

If you ask how Joseph knew it represented 3 days and not 3 months or years. I answer you that the Holy Spirit guided Joseph in his interpretation, not his own imaginative powers alone.

14. אברבנאל על תורה, בראשית מ:א

ואם תשאל מי הגיד ליוסף שהיו שלשת ימים, ולא חדשים או שנים, אני אשיבך מלין, שרוח הקודש היה מישר את יוסף במה שפתר, לא כוחו המשער בלבד.

VII. Pharaoh's Palace

15. Breishit 41

(15) And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it. Now I have heard it said of you that for you to hear a dream is to tell its meaning." (16) Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "Not !! God will see to Pharaoh's welfare." (17) Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream, I was standing on the bank of the Nile, (18) when out of the Nile came up seven sturdy and well-formed cows and grazed in the reed grass. (19) Presently there followed them seven other cows, scrawny, ill-formed, and emaciated—never had I seen their likes for ugliness in all the land of Egypt! (20) And the seven lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven cows, the sturdy ones; (21) but when they had consumed them, one could not tell that they had consumed them, for they looked just as bad as before. And I awoke. (22) In my other dream, I saw seven ears of grain, full and healthy, growing on a single stalk; (23) but right behind them sprouted seven ears, shriveled, thin, and scorched by the east wind. (24) And the thin ears swallowed the seven healthy ears. I have told my magician-priests, but none has an explanation for me." (25) And Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same: Pharaoh has been told what God is about to do. (26) The seven healthy cows are seven years, and the seven healthy ears are seven years; it is the same

15. בראשית מא

(טו) ויאמר פרעה אל-יוסף חלום חלמתי ופתר אין אתו ואני שמעתי עליך לאמר תשמע חלום לפתר אתו: (טז) ויען יוסף את-פרעה לאמר בלעדי אלקים יענה את-שלום פרעה: (יז) וידבר פרעה אל-יוסף בחלמי הנני עמד על-שפת היאר: (יח) והנה מן-היאר עלת שבע פרות בריאות בשר ויפת תאר ותרעינה באחו: (יט) והנה שבע-פרות אחרות עלות אחריהן דלות ורעות תאר מאד ורקות בשר לא-ראיתי כהנה בכל-ארץ מצרים לרע: (כ) ותאכלנה הפרות הרקות והרעות את שבע הפרות הראשנות הבריאות: (כא) ותבאנה אל-קרפנה ולא נודע כי-באו אל-קרפנה ומראיהן רע כאשר בתחלה ואיקץ: (כב) וארא בחלמי והנה שבע שבלים עלת בקנה אחד מלאות וטבות: (כג) והנה שבע שבלים צנמות דקות שדפות קדים צמחות אחריהם: (כד) ותבלען השבלים הדקות את שבע השבלים הטבות ואמר אל-החרטמים ואין מגיד לי: (כה) ויאמר יוסף אל-פרעה חלום פרעה אחד הוא את אשר האלקים עשה הגיד לפרעה: (כו) שבע פרות הטבת שבע שנים הנה ושבע השבלים הטבת שבע שנים הנה חלום אחד הוא: (כז) ושבע הפרות הרקות והרעות העלת אחריהן שבע שנים הנה ושבע השבלים הרקות שדפות הקדים יהיו שבע שני רעב: (כח) הוא הדבר אשר דברתי אל-פרעה אשר האלקים עשה הראה את-פרעה: (כט) הנה שבע שנים באות שבע גדול בכל-ארץ מצרים: (ל) וקמו שבע שני רעב אחריהן ונשכח כל-השבע בארץ מצרים וכלה הרעב את-הארץ: (לא) ולא-יודע השבוע בארץ מפני הרעב ההוא אחרי-כן כי-כבד הוא מאד: (לב) ועל השנות החלום אל-פרעה

dream. (27) The seven lean and ugly cows that followed are seven years, as are also the seven empty ears scorched by the east wind; they are seven years of famine. (28) It is just as I have told Pharaoh: Pharaoh has been shown what God is about to do. (29) Immediately ahead are seven years of great abundance in all the land of Egypt. (30) After them will come seven years of famine, and all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. As the land is ravaged by famine, (31) no trace of the abundance will be left in the land because of the famine thereafter, for it will be very severe. (32) As for Pharaoh having had the same dream twice, it means that the matter has been determined by God, and that God will soon carry it out. (33) “Accordingly, let Pharaoh find someone who’s discerning and wise, whom you can set over the land of Egypt. (34) And let Pharaoh take steps to appoint overseers over the land, and organize the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty. (35) Let all the food of these good years that are coming be gathered, and let the grain be collected under Pharaoh’s authority as food to be stored in the cities. (36) Let that food be a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will come upon the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish in the famine.” (37) The plan pleased Pharaoh and all his courtiers. (38) And Pharaoh said to his courtiers, “Could we find another like him—a man with the divine spirit?” (39) So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is none so discerning and wise as you. (40) You shall be in charge of my court, and by your command shall all my people be directed only with respect to the throne shall I be superior to you.” (41) Pharaoh further said to Joseph, “See, I put you in charge of all the land of Egypt.” (42) And removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph’s hand; and he had him dressed in robes of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck.

פְּעָמַיִם כִּי־נִבֹן הַדְּבָר מֵעַם הָאֱלֹקִים וּמִמָּהָר
הָאֱלֹקִים לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ: (לג) וְעַתָּה יֵרָא פְּרַעֲהַ אִישׁ נִבֹן
וְחִכְמָם וַיִּשְׁיִתְהוּ עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: (לד) יַעֲשֶׂה פְּרַעֲהַ
וַיִּפְקֹד פְּקָדִים עַל־הָאֶרֶץ וְחָמֵשׁ אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
בְּשֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי הַשְּׁבַע: (לה) וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת־כָּל־אֹכֶל
הַשָּׁנִים הַטֹּבוֹת הַבָּאת הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּצְבְּרוּ־בָר תַּחַת
יַד־פְּרַעֲהַ אֹכֵל בְּעָרִים וּשְׁמוֹ: (לו) וְהָיָה הָאֹכֶל
לְפָקֶדוֹן לְאֶרֶץ לְשֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי הָרָעַב אֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶינָּה בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם וְלֹא־תִכְרַת הָאֶרֶץ בְּרָעַב: (לז) וַיִּיטֵב הַדְּבָר
בְּעֵינֵי פְּרַעֲהַ וּבְעֵינֵי כָל־עַבְדָּיו: (לח) וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרַעֲהַ
אֶל־עַבְדָּיו הִנֵּמְצָא כֹּזֵה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹקִים בּוֹ:
(לט) וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרַעֲהַ אֶל־יוֹסֵף אַחֲרֵי הַדִּיעַ אֱלֹקִים
אוֹתְךָ אֶת־כָּל־זֹאת אֵיךְ־נִבֹן וְחִכְמָם כְּמוֹךָ: (מ) אֵתְהָ
תִּהְיֶה עַל־בֵּיתִי וְעַל־פִּיךָ יִשְׁקוּ כָל־עַמִּי רַק הַכֶּסֶף
אֶגְדֹּל מִמֶּךָ: (מא) וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרַעֲהַ אֶל־יוֹסֵף רְאֵה נְתַתִּי
אֶתְךָ עַל כָּל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: (מב) וַיִּסַּר פְּרַעֲהַ
אֶת־טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָהּ עַל־יַד יוֹסֵף וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ
אֹתוֹ בְּגָדֵי־שֵׁשׁ וַיִּשֶׂם רֶבֶד הַזָּהָב עַל־צַוְאָרוֹ:

16. Rav Amnon Bazak, Starting Point, Parshat Miketz

...However, Pharaoh did not dream the same dream twice. He had two separate dreams. They represent two possible futures, depending on which course of action Pharaoh chooses. One model is that of the cows. Following that will lead to a situation in which "no trace of abundance will be left." That is what will happen to the rest of the world. But there is a second possibility, and that is the model of the sheaves. Here the effect of the famine will be blunted because the Egyptians will draw upon the food they stored up in the years of plenty "so that the land may not perish in the famine." Both options lie before Pharaoh - he has only to choose.

17. Robert K. Greenleaf, "The Servant as Leader" (1970)

The servant-leader is servant first ... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve ... Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served.

VIII. The Original Dreams**18. Rav Elchanan Samet, "The Meaning of Yosef's Dreams" (VBM)**

...The third stage is also surprising: the sheaves of the brothers get up from their places, surround Yosef's sheaf and bow down to it. Here the brothers are reunited again with Yosef, as in stage 1, but this time not in a situation of equality but rather in a situation of dependence on Yosef, who is the distributor of produce. This is the stage during which the brothers go down to Egypt and the family is reunited there in order to survive the years of famine by Yosef's hand. Thus the entire story of Yosef is spread before us, from beginning to end, all rolled up in this dream...

Let us now turn our attention to Yosef's second dream: "Behold, the sun and moon and eleven stars bow down to me." ... It seems that the idea symbolized here is that the survival of Ya'akov's household and the foundation for the existence of the future chosen nation as a separate and illuminating element in the world, is dependent on Yosef. Not on Yosef as the distributor of food and produce (the symbolism of the sheaf in the first dream), but rather on Yosef the man, the person, his sensitivity and his spirituality. For Yosef's mission in Egypt is a dual one: he must take care of his family's physical survival during the years of famine, but no less important is his concern for the separate national-spiritual existence of his father's household in exile – the first exile of Am Yisrael...

...Yosef also came to learn that dreams sent from Heaven do not come just to compliment a person and foretell a shining future that awaits him; rather, they foretell the future in order that the person properly prepare himself for the mission that he will have to undertake. Such dreams always have a purpose, and demand that a person be ready to act and to assume the burden...

IX. Full Circle - Ya'akov's Death**19. Breishit 50: 15-17**

(15) When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrong that we did him!"

(16) So they sent this message to Joseph, "Before his death your father left this instruction: (17) So shall you say to Joseph, 'Forgive, I urge you, the offense and guilt of your brothers who treated you so harshly.' Therefore, please forgive the offense of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph was in tears as they spoke to him.

19. בראשית מ:טו-יז

(טו) וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶחָיו יוֹסֵף כִּי־מֵת אָבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יִשְׁטַמְנוּ יוֹסֵף וְהָשֵׁב יוֹסֵף לָנוּ אֶת כָּל־הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר גָּמְלָנוּ אֹתוֹ: (טז) וַיִּצְווּ אֶל־יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר אֲבִיךָ צִוָּה לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ לֵאמֹר: (יז) כֹּה־תֹאמְרוּ לְיוֹסֵף אֲנֵנוּ שָׂא נָא פֶשַׁע אַחִיךָ וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי־רָעָה גָּמְלוּךָ וְעַתָּה שָׂא נָא לְפָשַׁע עַבְדֵי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ וַיִּבְרַךְ יוֹסֵף בְּדַבְרָם אֵלָיו:

20. Ramban on Breishit 45:27

And they told him all the words of Joseph: It appears to me according to the simple meaning that throughout all the days of his life, Jacob was never told that the brothers sold Joseph. Rather he thought that he got lost in the field and that the ones that found him took him and sold him to Egypt. For the brothers did not want to tell him their sin, especially since they feared for their lives, lest he get enraged and curse them.... And Joseph did not want to tell him because of his high morals...

20. רמב"ן על בראשית מה:כז

נראה לי על דרך הפשט, שלא הוגד ליעקב כל ימיו כי אחיו מכרו את יוסף, אבל חשב כי היה תועה בשדה, והמוצאים אותו לקחוהו ומכרו אותו אל מצרים, כי אחיו לא רצו להגיד לו חטאתם, אף כי יראו לנפשם פן יקצוף ויקללם... ויוסף במוסרו הטוב לא רצה להגיד לו...

Further learning:

- Nehama Leibowitz, New Studies in Bereshit
- R' Elchanan Samet, "[The Meaning of Yosef's Dreams](#)" (VBM)
- R' Amnon Bazak, "[From Potifar's House to Prison](#)" (VBM)
- R' Alex Israel, "[Vayeshev: Only a Dream?](#)" (VBM)