

## It happened at the end of two years to the day; and Pharaoh was dreaming. (41:1)

Pharaoh's dream was the beginning of Yosef's liberation from the Egyptian jail and the precursor of his ascension to leadership. At the end of *Parashas Vayeishav*, the *Midrash Tanchuma* distinguishes between Hashem and man in regard to reward and punishment. Man strikes with a blade and heals with a bandaid. Hashem, on the other hand, transforms the source of punishment into the actual healing agent. Yosef was sold into slavery as a result of his own dreams; he was liberated as a consequence of Pharaoh's dreams. His dreams caused his downfall; by interpreting Pharaoh's dreams he ascended to freedom and power. This *Midrash* seems to ignore the fact that Yosef manifests other "problems" which catalyze his sale as a slave. The multi-colored coat caused jealousy among his brothers; he spoke ill against his brothers, which did not help to further his relationship with them. While the dreams were a catalyst for the reversal of his fortune, they were not the only cause. Indeed, the *lashon hora* he spoke -- which caused his brothers to view him as a serious threat -- was certainly much more sinful than his dreams -- which were beyond his control. Why does the *Torah* place the responsibility of Yosef's downfall upon his dreams?

*Horav Elchonon Sorotzkin, zl*, asserts that dreams played a pivotal role in Yosef's life. His brothers called him the *baal ha'chalomos*, the dreamer. He had a dream in which his brothers' sheaves in the field bowed down to him. This dream was followed by yet another dream in which the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. These dreams were a factor in his sale to the Egyptians. The dreams of the butler and the baker impacted Yosef further. On the one hand, the dreams caused him to remain in jail longer. On the other hand, they helped to effect his release. In the final analysis, his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream catalyzed his ascent to power. One dream was a sin. The other represented his salvation. Why did this discrepancy exist?

Every young person is not only permitted to dream, but should be encouraged to dream. He should dream of great expectations for himself, great achievements, great triumphs. He should even aspire to and dream of monarchy - as Yosef did. One criteria, however, must be met. He should view his position of power as an opportunity to serve the greater community, to effect a greater good for everyone - not a chance to take power for personal reasons. His dreams should be visions of his empowerment to help more people, to make a greater *kiddush Hashem*, sanctification of Hashem's Name.

In Yosef's original dream he envisioned himself as a ruler; everyone was bowing down to him. He was attaining nothing for the people; he was just receiving the honors. In the butler and baker's dreams, he perceived an opportunity for self-advancement, namely to be released from jail. The salvation, the moment of healing, appeared as soon as Yosef interpreted Pharaoh's dream. His dream implied the need to care for a nation, to direct and supervise the years of abundance in preparation for the years of famine. Yosef came forward to take the initiative. He was prepared to lead, to direct, to supervise and prepare the country for the worst that was yet to come. Yosef had

come of age. His dreams were no longer visions of grandeur; rather, they now represented his mission in life, a call to serve others. The source of his "ailment" transformed into the harbinger of his recovery.