

Mikeitz--"At the end"  
Gen 41:1-44:17  
December 20, 2014  
Temple Sinai

***In Parshat Miketz, Joseph is in Egypt. He resists the advances of the Pharaoh's wife, and finds himself in the dungeon, although he now is deemed righteous. Because he is remembered by the cupbearer to be an interpreter of dreams, Pharaoh brings him out of prison to interpret his dream of the cattle and the corn. Joseph is elevated into a position of highest authority and power next to the the Pharaoh. He marries and has two sons, the first of whom he names Manasseh, meaning: "God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home." (RR)***

## Introduction

Joseph is in Egypt. He resists the advances of the Pharaoh's wife, and finds himself in the dungeon, although he now is deemed righteous. Because he is remembered by the cupbearer to be an interpreter of dreams, Pharaoh brings him out of prison to interpret his dream of the cattle and the corn. Joseph is elevated into a position of highest authority and power next to the the Pharaoh. He marries and has two sons, the first of whom he names Manasseh, meaning: "God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home."  
(Gen 41:51)

As if!

We can think of this as aspirational. The rest of this is the hard work of refinement.

After this his brothers come to him during the time of famine and need his help. These are the same brothers who sold him into slavery. Needless to say, Joseph, this dreamer and dream interpreter, has his issues to work out with these brothers. The remainder of this portion concerns his wrestling with his reunion with these jealous and betraying brothers who are now in need of him.

In beginning to look at this portion, I went to my usual, easily accessible midrash, and the Zohar. I found a statement in the Zohar which captured my attention for our contemplative purpose:

"And we have learned: A person setting out on a journey should prepare himself for three things: for a present, for combat, and for prayer."  
(Zohar, Vol. 3, Daniel Matt, translator, 1:205a, p. 255)

How do we go on this journey of our lives, learning how to live righteously, encountering the normal obstacles of jealousy, betrayal, and all the other trials life can bring us? This includes all the ways we can betray ourselves and our own desire for the good, for wholesomeness, for peace. How can this statement inform us, all of us dreamers, on our journey?

"...a person setting out on a journey should prepare himself for three things: for a present, for combat, and for prayer."

Let us add to this another idea:

There is this radical statement in the Zohar:

...it "has been established, for when an entire people live in peace, without enemies, the blessed Holy One feels compassion for them and judgment does not prevail against them. Even if they all worship idols--yet live in peace--judgment has no dominion over them..."

(ibid.1:200b, p. 231)

Seeking peace becomes the highest good.

If this the most important thing, how do we do this? How do we seek peace [*shalom*]? How do we seek peace in our families, in our communities, between nations, within ourselves?

What does this mean, to be ready for a present, for combat, and for prayer? And how can we turn each of these toward the movement toward peace?

With these questions in mind, this will be a contemplation in three parts. The first part explores the dreaming and imaginative mind. How do we work with this, as a present to us? The dreams are the presents we receive.

The second part is on the constant choice to seek wholesomeness within and with others, and with this soul of ours, which is constantly being formed and in communion, although sometimes hidden. How do we cut through the cords of ignorance and bondage with discriminating wisdom, as if in combat, to let our souls be sustained and grow?

The third part will become a type of prayer, a visualization particularly relevant to this time of year, just before the solstice, when darkness yearns for the light. This is Chanukah, when we light candles in the dark. We even light them when we know there is not enough oil; we ignite the wick anyway and are met with illumination. The prayer and the present unite.

Knowing this to be true, we go on our journey.

## **Niggun**

### **Part I The present....**

We can talk here of dreams and receive them as we receive a puzzle and a gift. In this contemplation, we can, if it is more fitting for us, take the word "dream" and substitute the idea of our imaginative life, or our fantasies. Or we can work with the thought patterns we cling to and confuse as representing the really real. In actuality, the imagination and our familiar thought patterns are like dreams, but the way they touch mystery is more shrouded with the heaviness of this world than the dreams that come to us at night, as gifts.

So with that freedom of considering dreams, fantasies, or fixed patterns of perception, let us consider:

From the Zohar

"As we have already learned, a person is shown in his dreams what corresponds to his character; this is how he sees, how his **souls** ascends and extends, every single one according to its rung, fittingly."  
(Zohar, Vol. 3, Daniel Matt, translator, 1:194a, p.187)

When a person sleeps at night, his soul ascends and attains a vision corresponding to his level of virtue, a vision conveyed in his dream."  
(ibid., footnote 54, p. 187)

"A person should remember a good dream, so that it will not be forgotten; then it will be fulfilled. For as it is forgotten by a person, so it is forgotten above him.

"... A dream uninterpreted is like a letter unread." And come and see: if one does not remember, it is as if one does not know. So, whoever forgets a dream and does not know it--it is not poised above him to be fulfilled.

..."For a dream comes through a multitude of affairs... (Ecclesiastes 5:2)  
As has been established, a dream has numerous bearers and chieftains, rung upon rung, so that some dreams are entirely true and some contain truth and falsehood.  
(ibid., 1:200a, p. 225)

"Come and see: We have learned that a person who has a dream should

disclose it in the presence of those who love him, that their will might rise favorably toward him and they might express themselves favorably, will and word becoming completely favorable: will within thought, beginning of all, and word, culmination of all. .... A person's friends are essential for the fulfillment of that favorable interpretation, and all is fitting. Therefore the blessed Holy One informs a person, each and every one according to his rung, according to his aspect."

(ibid., 1:20a, p. 226)

We pray that we recognize and know a good friend... That we recognize the gift of a new idea...recognize the gift of presence.

From Rav Kook:

"All souls contain a mixture of good and bad traits. A dream is the nascent development of the soul's hidden traits, as they are beginning to be realized. A single dream may contain multiple meanings, since it reflects contradictory qualities within the soul.

When the interpreter gives a positive interpretation to a dream, he helps develop and realize positive traits hidden in the soul of the dreamer. A negative interpretation, on the other hand, will promote negative traits."

(Rav Kook, Gold from the Land of Israel, p. 84.

For what does your soul yearn?

What are our dreams looking to know?

What needs to be reinforced?

What is your good friend helping you seek in your dreams through their words?

"Whatever one implants firmly in the mind becomes the essential thing."

(Matt, the Essential Kabbalah, p. 110)

**Chant:**

**Bless the Creator, O my soul (Psalm 104:1)**

**Barchi Nafshi et Hashem**

**Silence**

**Part II Prepare for combat; the necessity of discriminating wisdom**

From the Zohar

Joseph proved his virtue by refusing the advances of Potiphar's wife, and Joseph obtained the title of Righteous.

(1:194b, p. 191, Zohar, Vol. 3, Daniel Matt, translator)

God called for Joseph's liberation from prison--initiated from above...

Joseph's process of refinement is understood to be these trials, the test of temptation and his harsh imprisonment.

(ibid, paraphrased from p. 192, footnote 82)

God is dependent on the righteous.

"He opened, saying 'Who is like YHVH our God, enthroned on high? (Psalms 113:5) --ascending His throne of glory, not revealing Himself below: when virtuous people are not to be found in the world, He withdraws from them and does not reveal Himself. Looking far below--when those present in the world are virtuous, the blessed Holy One descends His rungs toward creatures below to watch over the world and benefit them. For when the virtuous are absent from the world, He withdraws and hides His face from them, does not watch over them, since the righteous are the foundation and sustenance of the world, as it is written: The righteous one is the foundation of the world (Proverbs 10:25). (Zohar, Vol. 3, Daniel Matt, translator, 1:195a, pp. 194-5)

The Divine needs us to work on the cultivation of virtue.

At the same time it is true that:

Neither the eyes nor the ears are "under a person's control, while the mouth is, and as hard as these three struggle, they cannot fathom or grasp everything."

(ibid., 1:195a, p 195)

"...all inhabitants of the world neither know nor consider the foundation of their existence. Even Solomon, who was wiser than anyone in the world, could not comprehend them."

Ibid, p. 196

Even with this mystery, we are called upon to hone our intentions and open our hearts, and with that we are assisted in ways we can never understand:

...If a person goes to the right, performing an action, there is a rung appointed to that side, offering him assistance; how many assist him! If a

person goes to the left and commits his acts, the act he commits is appointed to that side, accusing him, conducting him to that side, leading him astray...

He has also set the world in their heart. The entire world and all its activity depend solely upon the desire of the heart, as it arises in the will of a human being. Happy are the righteous who attract good deeds, benefiting themselves and the whole world! Woe to those who do not know the time of that action and do not care about performing their actions in the world according to the remedy needed by the world, aligning the action with its appropriate rung. Why? because they do not know."

(Zohar, Vol. 3, Daniel Matt, translator, 1:195b, pp. 196-7)

Our spirit, our soul is continuously being formed in consort with the Divine.

"When a human being is created and the blessed Holy One endows him with a soul and he merges into the atmosphere, that spirit within him does not find enough body into which it can expand, so it remains in an ambulatory inside of him. As the person's body expands, that spirit expands, imparting its energy; as the body grows, the spirit transmits its power within him, invigorating him. So forms the spirit of a human within him, literally.

Now you might ask: why forms? Because that spirit needs additional power from above, supporting it so the blessed Holy One forms the spirit of a human with him, providing him with assistance.

Come and see: When that spirit needs assistance, in accordance with the person's state of being, and the body's fitness, the spirit is enhanced, augmented by spirit, attaining perfection. This forms the spirit of a human within him."

(ibid., 1:197b, p. 207)

"Why the present tense, implying a continuous process: Once the person matures, it would seem that the soul is finally complete. In a sense, however, the formation of the soul never ends."

(ibid., p. 207, footnote 175.)

Our intentions and our actions create the habits which can ensnare us. We are warned to be prepared for combat, for the necessary cultivation of discriminating wisdom.

"Come and see what is written: Woe unto them who haul iniquity with flimsy cords, and sin as with cart ropes. (Isaiah 5:18) With flimsy cords-- that he tramples with the heel unconcernedly but gradually it is reinforced,

become like cart ropes. That sin is reinforced, leading him astray in this world and in the world that is coming."

(ibid., 1:199a, p. 219.)

"The evil impulse first resembles the thread of a spider but ultimately it resembles cart ropes.."

(ibid., p. 219, footnote 247.)

"Woe for that day, a day of wrath and humiliation. Therefore one should incite his impulse every day and bring to mind that day when he will stand in judgement before the King and be embedded beneath the dust to rot away, soul separating from him..

(ibid., 1:202a, p. 237.)

Remembering our mortality can lift our intentions and put everything we covet into perspective.

### **Chant**

**V'al bamotai yadrichayni**

**God guides on the path for me upon my high places (Habakkuk 3:19)**

Music by Rabbi Shefa Gold

### **Silence**

## **Part III The prayer**

With intention, prayer can help us to remove the obstacles we create--habits and circumstances, and imbalances in the body, and confusion and ignorance in the mind. Even when we are trying to learn, we may mentally edit what we hear, adding more to them than is being said or ignoring certain aspects we are not capable of hearing. Prayer offsets these hindrances.

(Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, "Prayer", paraphrased)

Now, at the darkest time of the year, during Chanukah, we pray. In darkness, we pray for the faith to light the wick, even though there is not enough oil to sustain a flame. Lighting the wick is enough. Looking for the light within the darkness is enough.

Light is emitted without ever becoming separate from its source.

Light does not mix or mingle with any other substance. Light is received as far as we are receptive.

Mystical Concepts in Chassidism, Jacob Immanuel Schochet, pp. 41-45

In this prayer we use the imagination.

The imagination can be the fuel.

Our yearning creates the friction, the energy.

It is a way of making contact with the unknowable.

The imagination is an organ that can create an image, like a dream which takes on a life of its own. It becomes the present. It can create light that is truly visual, but can not be seen.

In this imaginative prayer from the 13th century, there are six different kinds of light....

Perhaps the light of the arch angels are on either side of us; or maybe they are of the sefirot...primary emanations of the undifferentiated...

What is above; Who contains all?

"Whatever one implants firmly in the mind becomes the essential thing.

So if you pray and offer a blessing to God, or if you wish your intention to be true, imagine that you are light.

All around you--in every corner and on every side--is light.

Turn to your right, and you will find shining light,

to your left, splendor, a radiant light.

Between them, up above the light of the Presence.

Surrounding that, the light of life.

Above it all, a crown of light--crowning the aspiration of thought, illuminating the paths of imagination, spreading the radiance of vision.

This light is unfathomable and endless."

(Daniel Matt, the Essential Kabbalah, p. 110)

Imagine that you are light

Sha'ar ha Kavvanah, attributed to Azriel of Gerona, 13th century

This is our prayer.



**Kumi Ori ki va Oraych**

**קומי אורי, כי בא אורך**

**Arise and Shine, for your light has come! (Isaiah 60:1)**

Music by David Goldstein

Text: Rhonda Karlton Rosen

Chants: David Goldstein