

*Shiur L'Yom Shishi*¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayashev:*** **Genesis 40:1-23**
 Haftarah: **Amos 3:1-8**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Acts 7:9-16**

“Do not interpretations belong to God?”
[Genesis 40:8]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 35:17-25;
This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #6, *B'racha* [Blessing]

As the curtain of Torah rises on today's aliyah we find that a thick veil of darkness seems to have squelched every last semblance of light in the world. Black holes of dark energy are suddenly exploding everywhere. The world suddenly seems overcome by anger, by offense, by fear, by anxiety and stress, by hate-filled ideology, by emotionally-charged rhetoric, by depression, by oppression, by racial, economic, and cultural hatred, by lust, by intellectual snobbery, by misinformation, by unconfirmed suspicion, by uninformed accusation, and by foolish whims of romantic sentimentality and idealism.

This *blitzkrieg* of encroaching darkness happens every year about this time. This is the time of year when suicides, murders, assaults, and thefts, as well as incidents of school and workplace violence, road rage, parking lot rage, and shopping center rage, spiral out of control. Everyone is suddenly mad about something. Everyone is suddenly fearful about something. Everyone is suddenly tense. Ah, this is the perfect time for the sons and the daughters of the Creator of the Universe to stop complaining, stop shaking, wake up, arise, shine, and carry the lamp of the wisdom and the glory of the Holy One forth into the world at its time of deepest need.

Where, one may ask, in this season, are *the 'torch-bearers' of the Creator and Most High God?* Where, one might inquire, are *the Holy One's designated and empowered 'witnesses'?* What, one might have legitimately wondered, has happened to *the covenant the Holy One is said to have made with Avraham and with his descendants forever?*

What has become of *the redemptive plan of the Holy One for mankind and*

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Creation?

***Living in the Times:
Rising and Falling With the Patriarchal Narratives of Torah***

As it is in the Torah portion of the week, so it is in our world and in our lives.

So we must ask, as darkness encroaches, *what has become of Ya'akov Avinu* [i.e. Jacob our father/ancestor]? Alas, there's the rub. Our patriarch continues as he has now for years to sit *sheva*, mourning disconsolately not only for his beloved Rachel who '*died on*' him on the road near Beit-Lechem but also now for Rachel's firstborn, Yosef. Ya'akov's grief has reduced him to *a shadow of his former self*. Depression has virtually *disabled* him. His Covenant Torch of Divine Light is, if not 'out', *burning so dimly that only the Holy One can see it*.

Okay – so *what has become of the brilliant and charismatic young dreamer Yosef* – the family's *best and brightest hope for the future of the Covenant clan and the world*? Alas Yosef has disappeared. Unbeknownst to any in his family he now wastes away in an Egyptian prison, bearing the punishment of a crime he did not – *would not* - commit.

A third question we might ask is *what has become of the promising young pragmatist Y'hudah, the 4th son of Ya'akov's union with Leah*? Alas Y'hudah appears to have abandoned the God-centered lifestyle of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov - as well as the *b'rit* and the calling of Avraham's descendants - altogether. At last sight he was dwelling among the *Kena'an'im* [Canaanites] immersing his soul in the materialism and sensuality of pagan culture – all the way up to dallying with prostitutes who sit by the side of the road.

Let's not give up yet. *What, we might ask, has become of Ya'akov/Yisrael's 10 other sons*? And that is the problem. That is the reason dark energy is consuming the world. Not one of those 10 sons, nor Ya'akov, nor Yosef, nor Y'hudah, has stepped forward to fill what I call the *Light Brigade leadership void*. All the heirs to the promises of the Holy One seem, at present, in this dark season, to be *struggling mightily just to keep their families together and alive*, to keep their own sanity and household intact, and to not be completely overwhelmed by life.

Alas, this time of the year *the darkness starts closing in* and settling upon the earth. Like a thick blanket of wet winter snow it falls. As it is in the natural, so it is in the spiritual. During this period of time Torah's pages are completely void of 'God-encounters'. This time of year is a time of *hester p'nim* – the *hidden Face*. And sometimes the separation – and the heaviness of the darkness that asserts

itself in the absence of the Light of our Bridegroom-King's Countenance - seems unbearable.

Where Are You, Master of the World?

Where, the question must have been asked, *in this very dark hour on planet earth, was the Holy One? Why*, those involved must have wondered, *was the Holy One allowing His chosen vessels of redemption and blessing to go through such trauma and such pain?* If, as we have been taught, the Holy One is indeed a *loving God*, faithful to His covenant with Avraham, with Yitschak, and with Ya'akov, and concerned with all Creation, why does He allow His people to suffer so?

Ah but let's *look closer*, Dear Reader. Let us open our spiritual eyes and look beyond the ***tachat ha-shemesh*** [under the sun] realm² of ordinary human vision. Let us look *beyond the veil*. Let us look *into the realm of tachat ha-ohr* - the *unseen realm* where the light source comes from Genesis 1:3 [***Let there be Light . . .***] instead of from Genesis 1:14 [***Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years . . .***], and where true reality lies.

Let us dare to look beyond the realm of 'through a glass darkly', and into the realm of '***p'nei'im al p'nei'im*** [face-to-Face]³.

Look Again!

When we look closer we see that, contrary to the way it seemed, the Holy One has not been, and is not now, sitting idly by, oblivious to His people's plight. Throughout this time of darkness He has been - and at this moment is - very, very busy about the task of bringing to pass His prophecy to Avraham that his descendants would be strangers and slaves in a country not their own for four hundred years.

² The reference comes from *Kohelet* [Ecclesiastes], where we are told all about the futility and emptiness of life lived exclusively in the realm of ***tachat ha-shemesh*** (under the sun). ***Ecclesiastes 1:1-3, 5-9, 14; 2:11-22; 3:16; 4:1-3, 7, 15; 5:13, 6:1-2, 12; 8:9, 15-17; 9:3-6; 11-13.***

³ The reference of course comes from Genesis 32:20, referring to Ya'akov's description of how he saw the Holy One in a manifest form at the place by the River Yabbok which he named Peni'el - the Face of God. The same phrase is used in Exodus 33:11 and Deuteronomy 34:10, to describe how Moshe saw and interacted with the Holy One - *face to face, as a man speaks to his friend*. The phrase ***p'nei'im al-p'nei'im*** is also used to describe the level of revelation which was given at Sinai. See Deuteronomy 5:4, where Moshe tells the redeemed community, "***The Holy One talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire.***" This level of revelation is what Shaul of Tarsus was referring to in I Corinthians 13:12, when he said that now we see *through a glass darkly*, but then '*face-to-Face*'.

The Holy One is, you see, going to bring about a famine not many years hence. And the Amidah prayer focus for this week – ***B'racha*** – a petition for *provision*, is being fulfilled by the Holy One in advance of the people's need. The Holy One has a ***plan*** – a Divine Plan to preserve His People from annihilation by starvation and malnutrition, yes, but more than that, to build *character* in them, and to *restore both Y'hudah and Yosef to them* in the process.

Of course, the human beings alive at the time of the events recorded in today's aliyah could not see the Unseen Hand at work in the very real events and circumstances they had to face in real time. If they had known or understood what the Holy One was doing they probably would have either *tried to make it happen themselves*, or would have *tried to prevent the Will of the Holy One from being done*.

So it is with us. We do not know when famine will come. We do not know either the *timing* or the *details* of God's plan to deliver His Remnant. We do not know the end result nor the place in the Divine Plan for our lives of the struggles we are undergoing. In times of deep darkness who can be expected to interpret these things? But let us not despair. Somewhere, perhaps hidden under a bushel, there is still at least *one candle burning*.

The Shamash Candle – One Candle Burning!

Consider now the life of Yosef this far into the narrative. He has been *the apple of his father's eye . . .* and he has been *the victim of his brothers' rage*. He has been *the recipient of his master's favor . . . and the source of his master's blessing*. He has been both *the object of a woman's lustful imaginations . . . and the target of her baseless accusations*.

He has been *stripped of his garments and robbed of his dignity*. He has been *thrown in a pit*. He has been *sold to Ishmaelite traders*. He has been *auctioned publicly to the highest bidder*. He has been *wrongly accused of attempted rape*. And he has been *cast into a prison* for enemies of the State.

He has been forced to watch helplessly while the Holy One richly blessed the lives of men who worshipped idols and committed abominations for the sole reason that he, the chosen son of the chosen people, was serving as their slave.

"*What is wrong with this picture?*" he could well have asked. And as we prepare to enter into this season of *Chanukah* and meditate on the evil decree of Antiochus, on the struggles of the Maccabees, the Hellenists, and Greek culture, on the cleansing of the Temple and the rededication of the altar, and on the miracles attendant to that prototypical era, we know only this for certain: the most

important thing we can do - the most critical challenge for our lives - is not to *save the world*, or even to *wage war upon those who threaten to destroy it* - but is to **keep the light of God burning in our hearts and in our homes.**

We do not have to *illumine the world*, you see. We just have to keep ***one candle burning***. If we will simply do that, then when the time is right the Holy One will send a mighty, rushing wind . . . and a ***shamash candle somewhere*** – like unto **Yosef** – in which an ember of Divine Light still burns, **will combust into a spectacular super-nova of light** and energy - and the darkness which grips the world will flee before it.

May we all ***catch His fire*** this Chanukah season. May the fire that burns in our hearts this season *never be extinguished* - whatever circumstances we may endure. May the Holy One keep in you, as He did in Yosef, a ***pure vessel of oil*** with which to start a fire which will light the world. ***Happy Chanukah***, Beloved Children of the Holy One!

Ha-Mash'kim v Ha-Ofim [The Cupbearer and the Baker]

What does one need to make *Kiddush* and *Ha-Motzee* on a *yom tov*? Why, one needs *wine* and *bread*, of course. And who better in the land of Egypt to provide Yosef with the elements necessary for sanctifying the day there in the dungeon but Pharaoh's own *cupbearer* [i.e. wine steward] and Pharaoh's own *royal baker*?

In today's aliyah therefore we will see Yosef joined in Pharaoh's private prison by those men. It seems that both have suddenly fallen from favor with Pharaoh and now find themselves in desperate situations. Here is how Torah introduces us to these men:

V'yehi achar ha-d'varim ha-eleh

It happened after these things,

chate'u mashkeh melech-Mitzrayim

that the wine steward of the Egyptian king

V'ha-ofeh l'adoneyhem l'melech Mitzrayim

and his [royal] baker offended their master the king of Egypt.

V'yiktzof Par'oh al sh'nei sarisav

Pharaoh was angry with these two officers,

al sar ha-mashkim v'al sar ha-ofim

with the chief cupbearer and with the chief baker,

V'yiten otam b'mishmar beit sar ha-tabachim

So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard⁴,

el-beit ha-sohar mekom asher Yosef asur sham
into the dungeon, the place where Yosef was bound.

Vayifkod sar ha-tabachim et-Yosef itam v'yesharet otam
The captain of the guard then assigned them to Yosef, and he took care of them.

vayihyu yamim b'mish'mar
And they stayed many days in custody/detention.
[Genesis 40:1-4]

In the midst of the worst of conditions the Holy One works behind the scenes. First he re-establishes the trust between Yosef and Potifar. Torah has already told us that Potifar was the ‘*captain of the guard*’. Please note that the cupbearer and the baker were turned over by Pharaoh to none other than the ‘*captain of the guard*’.

Into whose custody does this ‘*captain of the guard*’ entrust them? Into the custody of *his former personal assistant* – the man accused of attempting to rape his wife – the young Hebrew slave Yosef. This reconciliation and re-establishment of trust is just the first fruits of a greater reconciliation and re-establishment of trust to come – that involving Yosef and his brothers. With this accomplished the Holy One stirs up in Yosef the mature form of the gift deposited in him when he was a child – the gift of prophetic dreams. When he was a child Yosef was *the dreamer* – he will now graduate from dreamer to *interpreter of dreams*⁵. One who has never dreamed himself can scarcely be trusted to interpret the dreams of others.

The Prophetic Dreams of the Cupbearer and the Baker

Once the cupbearer⁶ and baker arrived in Yosef’s custody, Yosef’s ability to receive prophetic dreams – dormant since his adolescence – appears to have awakened – but not in Yosef. It awakened *in the two Egyptian officials that had been placed in his charge*. Here is how Torah records this strange turn of events:

⁴ Keep in mind that this was none other than Potifar. See **Genesis 37:36**.

⁵ Two years later [in our next parsha, **Miketz**] this very gift will be the vehicle the Holy One uses to promote Yosef to a place where he can feed his people in the midst of world-wide famine.

⁶ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as ‘cupbearer’ or, in some versions, ‘butler’, is a form of the verb root **shaqah**, *shin, quf, hey*, Strong’s Hebrew word #8248, meaning to *give drink*, or *cause to drink*. The servant in question was **sar ha-mashqim** – the chief of those who give drink [to Pharaoh]. The first Biblical usage of this verb root is in Genesis 2:6, where Torah tells us that in the early days of Creation, before any rain fell, ‘*a mist went up from the earth, and watered [shaqah] the face of the ground.*’ See also Genesis 2:10, where we are told that ‘*a river went out of Eden to water [shaqah] the garden.*’ A later Scriptural figure known as a **mashqah** [cupbearer] to the king was Nehemiah, cupbearer to the Persian King Artaxerxes [see **Nehemiah 1:11**].

*They both dreamed a dream⁷,
each man dreamed his dream in one night*

* * *

*Yosef came in to them **b'boker** [in the morning], and saw them,
and saw that they were **zo'afim** [upset, sad].
He asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him
in custody in his master's house, saying,
Madua p'neichem ra'im ha-yom ["Why do you look so sad today?"]*

*They said to him, "We have dreamed a dream,
ufoter eyn oto [and there is no one who can interpret it]."*

*Yosef said to them,
Halo l'Elohim pitronim ["Don't interpretations belong to Elohim?"]*

***Sapru-na li.** [Why not tell them to me.]"*

And this is how Torah records the royal cupbearer's account of his dream:

***V'yomer lo b'chalomi v'hineh-gefen l'fanai**
'In my dream,' he said, 'there was a grape vine right there in front of me.*

***Uv'gefen sh'loshah sarigim**
The vine had three branches.*

***V'hi cheforachat altah**
As soon as its buds formed,*

***nitzah hivshilu ashkeloteyha anavim**
its blossoms bloomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes.*

***V'chos Par'oh b'yadi**
Pharaoh's cup was in my hand.*

***v'ekach et ha-anavim va'eschat otam el-kos Par'oh**
I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup.*

***v'eten et ha-kos al-kaf Par'oh**
Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.'*

The first thing we should note is that these 2 prophetic dreams that Yosef was given to *interpret* provide a perfect 'bookend' for the parsha – which as you will recall started with 2 prophetic dreams which Yosef had talked about. Perhaps there is actually a **connection** between the two sets of dreams. Hmmmmn. I will leave that idea out there for your prayerful consideration. I will focus instead on the specifics of the dreams of the cupbearer and baker and how those specifics aid

⁷ In the Hebrew, the word our English Bibles translate as 'dream' is **khalom**, *chet, lamed, vav, mem sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #2472, pronounced **khawl-ome'**. It generally refers to a *Divinely-initiated dream*. E.g., **Genesis 20:3 and 31:10-11, 31:24, 37:5, 9.**

the interpretation.

The Seven Prophetic Elements of the Cupbearer's Dream

Please note carefully that there are **seven separate elements of the royal cupbearer's dream.**

First, there is *a vine*.

Second, there are *three branches*.

Thirdly, there are an unspecified number of *buds*, which, in the course of the dream, become *blossoms*, then *clusters of grapes*.

Fourthly, there is *the cup of the king*.

Fifthly, there is *a partial harvesting of the grapes* by the cupbearer.

Sixthly, there is *the squeezing of the harvested portion of grapes* by the cupbearer such that their juice flows into the cup of the king.

And finally, there is *the placing of the cup in the hand of the king*.

Yosef apparently did not hesitate. He gave the cupbearer the following interpretation of his dream.

Zeh pitrono

'This is the interpretation:

Sh'loshet ha-sarigim sh'loshet yamim hem

The three branches are three days.

B'od sh'loshet yamim yisa Far'oh et-roshecha

In three days, Pharaoh will lift your head

V'hashivcha al-kanecha

and give you back your position.

V'natata kos-Par'oh b'yado kamish'pat ha-rishon

You will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you did before,

asher hayita mashkehu

when you were his steward.

[Genesis 40:9-13]

The interpretation offered by Yosef is definitely *good news* for the cupbearer. He

has descended but he will *ascend*. He has suffered disgrace but he will *receive vindication*. And that is all the cupbearer really needs to know. But did Yosef hold something back? Notice if you will that Yosef only mentioned two of the seven elements of the dream in the interpretation he gave the royal cupbearer. Yosef gave interpretive commentary to the cupbearer only on the *three branches* and on *the placement of the cup in the hand of the king*.

Yosef did not identify *the vine*. He did not discuss the buds/blossoms/clusters of grapes. He did not render any interpretation of either the *partial harvesting* or the *squeezing of the grapes*. And while he mentioned the placement of the cup in the hand of the king, Yosef also did not discuss anything about *the nature or essence of the cup* itself.

Keep those uninterpreted elements of the dream in mind. We will revisit them later. For now however we need to turn our attention to the other dream dreamed that night – the dream of the royal *ofim*, or baker.

The Baker's Dream

The dream of the baker⁸ is a different story altogether. The baker's dream itself, and of course the interpretation the Holy One gave to Yosef, constituted a very solemn warning to the baker – a warning that in a very short period of time a *horrible judgment would come upon him*. Here is how the baker described his dream:

af-ani b'chalomi

"I also was in my dream

v'hineh sh'loshah salei chori al-roshi

and, behold, three baskets of fine white bread were on my head.

Uvasal ha-elyon mikol ma'achal Par'oh ma'aseh ofeh

In the uppermost basket there was all kinds of baked food for Pharaoh,

v'ha-of ochel otam min-hasal me'al roshi

and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head."

[Genesis 40:16-18]

There are 5 elements of this dream. First, there are *three baskets of fine white bread*.

⁸ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'baker' is ***afah***, *alef, feh, hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #644, pronounced *aw-faw*, and meaning 'he bakes'. Its first usage in Torah is in reference to Lot, when he baked [***afah***] unleavened bread to feed the angels sent by the Holy One to S'dom to investigate the outcry which had come before The Holy One concerning the evil of that city. **Genesis 19:3**.

Second, there is *placing of these baskets on someone's head*, a head which the baker identifies as his own. [Note that the baker does not indicate how or by whom the baskets were prepared, nor by whose hands they were placed upon his head].

Third, there is *a qualitative difference between the bread in the first two baskets and the variety of baked foods prepared for the king* that are placed in the uppermost basket.

Fourth, there are *the birds*.

And fifth, there is *the eating, out of the basket, by the birds*, of the variety of baked foods prepared for the king. So . . . what is the interpretation, Yosef?

Yosef's Interpretation of the Baker's Dream

Yosef saw that the dream of the baker was similar to the cupbearer's dream in one particular - that the first thing mentioned in both dreams was the number 3 [in Hebrew, *sh'losh*]. At that point, however, Yosef noticed that the paths of the two dreams diverged significantly. In the cupbearer's dream, he had been *active* – he had taken up the cup, he had plucked a handful of grapes, he had squeezed the grapes until their juice flowed into Pharaoh's cup, and he had placed Pharaoh's cup in his hand. He *saw himself* in favor with Pharaoh. Indeed he saw himself in his old position.

In the royal baker's dream in contrast the baker did nothing active at all. Unlike the cupbearer the baker was *totally passive*. He did not see himself in favor with Pharaoh – in fact, he did not even see Pharaoh eating what he had baked for him. He saw himself as *a victim of birds*.

Moreover, in the cupbearer's dream there had been a *living vine*, and it was *full of life*. In a baker's dream one would not expect a vine, of course, but you would expect to see a flourishing field of grain from which his baking flour would come. There was, however, no such sign of life and promise in the baker's dream. In fact what happens in the baker's dream is that birds [which would be expected to eat grain in a field] attack 'fine white bread' in a basket on the man's head. This indicates that there was a shortage of living grain – which birds greatly prefer - available. ***These aspects of the baker's vision of his own future communicated themselves clearly to Yosef.***

Here is the way Torah records Yosef's interpretation of the baker's dream:

Zeh pitrono

"This is the interpretation.

Sh'loshet ha-salim sh'loshet yamim hem

*The three **baskets** are three days.*

B'od sh'loshet yamim yisa Far'oh et-roshcha me'aleycha

*Within three more days, Pharaoh will **lift up** your **head** from off you,*

V'talah otcha al-etz

and will hang you on a tree;

v'achal ha-of et-besarcha me'aleycha

*and the **birds** will eat your flesh from off you."*

On a direct, personal level the obvious **p'shat** or literal meaning is that *the Holy One wanted this baker to know what would happen to him – even though it was something bad*. The haftarah picks up on this theme (if you will accept it, today's assigned reading from the B'rit Chadasha does as well, but I will leave that for your meditation).

The basic truth is this: *the Holy One's way is always to announce to **someone** (He chooses to whom, and it is not usually the one men think it should be or would like it to be) any kind of judgment He intends to inflict*. This truth is an indispensable bit of knowledge to the people of the Holy One. The Holy One *wants you to know, before judgments are unleashed, that they are coming. And He wants you to know not only THAT judgment is coming, but what kind of judgment is coming, and why it is coming*. The Holy One actually wants you and me, like Yosef, to know what He is going to do *before He does it*. It is all part of being a descendant of Avraham, to whom the Holy One revealed what He was about to do in S'dom and G'morrah before He did it. As the Holy One said then:

Shall I hide from Avraham what I am about to do?

[Genesis 18:17]

If you are a party to the covenant the Holy One made with Avraham, then re-read that Divine declaration substituting your name for that of our beloved forefather. As the world changes before your eyes, *do not ever forget this truth*. And do not therefore look to established spiritual “moguls” or “authorities” – i.e. religious leaders - to announce the judgments of the Holy One, or the plans He has for you or for the world or the people around you. They cannot. They *should not be expected to*. The “leaders” of religious organizations and movements are, you see, simply **too dependent** – *financially and emotionally - upon the religious system presently in place to even contemplate any major change* – and be assured of this: *the judgments of the Holy One always involve a major change*.

So **sh'ma lecha** - *listen for yourself*. Listen *carefully* for the Divine Voice. **Sh'ma, sh'ma**, and **sh'ma** some more. And if even yet, despite straining to hear with all

your power, you find you still cannot hear the Holy One directly, *listen for a passionate voice of one of your fellows crying in the wilderness* – like a Noach, or an Avraham, or a Yosef, or a Yonah, or an Amos, or a Stephen.

Such are the true friends of the Holy One – those with ears to hear, to whom He loves to announce not only His *intentions* but oft-times even His *reasons*.

Judgment Day

Yosef's prophetic interpretations were quickly fulfilled. This is one of many instances in the Holy One's timetable when a significant event or series of events took place '***b'yom ha-sh'lishi***' – on the 'third day'. This 'third day' happened to be Pharaoh's birthday. That day became a prophetic precursor of the Great Day of Judgment – when the Holy One judges between the peoples of the earth.

Vayehi b'yom ha-sh'lishi yom huledet et-Par'oh

It happened the third day was Par'oh's birthday,

vaya'as mishteh l'chol-avadai

And he made a feast for all his servants,

Vayisa et-rosh sar ha-mash'kim

and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer

v'et-rosh sar ha-ofim b'toch avaday

and the head of the chief baker among his servants.

Vayashev et-sar ha-mash'kim al-mashkehu

He restored the chief cupbearer to his position again,

V'yiten ha-kos al-kaf Par'oh

and he gave the cup into Par'oh's hand;

V'et sar ha-ofim talah ka-asher patar lahem Yosef

but he hanged the chief baker, as Yosef had interpreted to them.

[Genesis 40:20-21]

Yosef's interpretations were very important to the cupbearer and the baker, of course. But why are we given all these details about dreams dreamed *over 3,000 years ago* by *people we do not even know* - and who were absolute *strangers to the covenant* no less?

Why were we not just told by Torah that the Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker each had a dream, that Yosef interpreted their dreams for them, and that Yosef's interpretation turned out to be prophetic of what happened? Why did the Writer of Torah insist that we be given *all the details*? And why are there aspects of the dreams that Yosef does not touch upon in his explanations/interpretations to the

men who actually did the dreaming? Is there something more going on here than meets the eye? Is it possible these two specific dreams are recited in detail by Torah because they have *prophetic importance for far more people than the cupbearer and the baker who dreamed them?*

Think about the cupbearer's dream. The central symbol is *the vine*. The vine is often used in Hebrew writing and thought as a symbol for Israel. See, for instance Hosea 10:1, where we are told that "*Yisrael was a spreading vine.*" See also Psalm 80:8, where the psalmist recites to the Holy One, concerning Israel: "*You brought a vine out of Egypt . . .*".

What might the *3 branches of that vine* which the cupbearer saw in his dream be? Might they possibly be the tribes of the children of Leah [under Y'hudah], the tribes of the children of Yosef [Under Efrayim], and the tribes of the children of the slave girls [under Dan]? Or might they be the three branches of the prophet, the priest, and the king, given to Israel as the Divine forms of government which will be joined together in Messiah? Or might they be the three *Shekinah*-radiance periods which Israel would experience – the era of the *Mish'kan*, the era of Sh'lomo's Temple, and the era of the Temple which the remnant who returned from Babylonian captivity built under Zerubbabel (to which Herod made gaudy, Romanesque modifications)?

What might *the juice-laden grapes* of which the cupbearer dreamed be? Could they be the leaders – physical and spiritual – of Israel which come forth from the aforesaid 'branches' of the vine? Might it be the priests and judges and kings and prophets and sages? Or might the grapes be the *talmidim* of the Messiah? Or perhaps do speak prophetically of 'all Israel', as referenced by Shaul of Tarsus in Romans 11?

What might *the cup of the king* represent prophetically? Jeremiah 51:7 calls Babylon a 'golden cup in the hand of the Holy One'. Zechariah 12:2 calls Jerusalem a 'cup of trembling' to all nations. Or is the *cup of the king* in the cupbearer's dream representative of the cup of the Holy One's judgment and/or wrath, as described in Isaiah 51 and in Jeremiah 25?

What might *the squeezing of the grapes* visualized by the cupbearer portend? Might it prophesy of the captivities, the persecutions, the destruction of the Temples, the exiles, the pogroms, and the holocausts experienced by Israel over the centuries? Might it refer to the '*time of Ya'akov's trouble*' which must occur before the Messiah's glorious appearance? Might it - since Y'shua was the representative of all Israel chosen to act as its surrogate to receive the Holy One's judgment on its behalf - reference the night of the passion, trial, torture, and execution of Y'shua of Natzret in the Garden of Gethsemane?

And what does *the juice of the grapes* that the cupbearer saw himself squeeze into the king's cup portend? Might it speak to us of the blood of the Passover lamb, collected in a vessel, and used to daub the doorposts of the houses of our people in Egypt? Might it prophesy of *the blood of the martyrs*, the innocents slain over the millennia? Or might it reference *the streams of blood which flowed from Y'shua's head, and back, and hands, and feet, and side?*

Could *the restoring the cupbearer to his original status after three days* be seen as symbolic of Israel being returned to the land and to her Divine calling as a light to the world after 3 periods of captivity/exile? Might it prophesy of 'all Israel being saved' as spoken of by Shaul of Tarsus in Romans 11? Might it reference Y'shua – as the first fruits of the greater resurrection - being restored to life after three days in the grave?

And what about the baker's dream? The baker's dream did not turn out so well. While the cupbearer received *atonement* and *restoration*, the baker received *judgment* and *punishment*.

What do *the three baskets of bread* seen by the baker symbolize? Note, there is nothing wrong with the bread or the baskets. The problem comes from exposing the baskets of bread improperly, i.e. leaving them *uncovered* and *unguarded* such that the fowl of the air can consume them. Does not this symbolize those who do not receive, cherish, and carefully *sh'mar* [guard, keep watch over] the bread of life?

Whose were the hands that put the improperly covered baskets of bread on the baker's head? What malevolent force or person or being led the baker to destruction? Does the baker's *state of unpreparedness* – his lack of a covering – bring to mind the man who did not wear wedding clothes to the wedding banquet thrown by the King for his son [Matthew 22:11-13] and/or the 5 foolish virgins who took with them no oil [Matthew 25:3]?

And of what do *the birds who ate of the food of the king* prophesy? Do they not symbolize the same 'fowls of the air' described by Y'shua in his parable of the sower and the seed? Luke 8:5 says: "***A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.***" Luke 8:11-12 explains: "***Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then comes the devil, and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.***"

Hmmmmn. Learn to distinguish between the King's cupbearers, bearers of new wine of the kingdom, and those who deliver nothing but stale bread, picked apart and polluted by the fowl of the air, and which brings death. It just may be that, in

due time, one of those cupbearers will remember you to the King.

Questions For Today's Study

1. In today's aliyah Yosef is joined in Pharaoh's private prison by two men in desperate situations. In the midst of the worst of conditions the Holy One arranges a divine encounter and stirs in Yosef the gift of interpreting prophetic dreams.

[A] What were the occupations of the two men who joined Yosef in prison in today's aliyah?

[B] Who do these men represent prophetically? [Hint: Consider the thing each man dealt with daily in the court of the king. What are these things used for in the spiritual realm? Who uses them - on earth, and in Heaven?]

[C] Into whose care did the captain of the guard place these men? Why do you think he did this?

[D] Why do you think both of these men dreamed a dream on the same night?

[E] Why did the dreams cause both men to be depressed?

[F] What was the first man's dream?

[G] What was the second man's dream?

[H] How was Yosef able to interpret the dream?

[I] Do you think people can be trained to interpret dreams? Explain your answer, first from a "Greek" viewpoint, and then from a Hebraic one.

[J] After revealing the interpretation of the first man's dream, Yosef asked that the man remember him to Pharaoh. How does Yosef describe to this man the way in which he came to be in the prison in Egypt? According to Yosef, at this stage in his life, who was responsible for his being imprisoned in Egypt?

[K] On what day did the interpretations given by Yosef come to pass?

2. In today's concluding aliyah from haftarah *Vayashev* the Holy One through His messenger Amos reveals His plan to bring judgment upon the "children of Israel" - "the whole family [He] brought up from the land of Egypt".

***'You only have I chosen of all the families of the eretz.'
Therefore I will punish you for all of your sins.'***

Do two walk together unless they have agreed?

Will a lion roar in the thicket when he has no prey?

Does a young lion cry out of his den if he has caught nothing?

Can a bird fall in a trap on the eretz where no snare is set for him?

Does a snare spring up from the ground when there is nothing to catch?

Does the shofar alarm sound in a city without the people being afraid?

Does evil happen to a city and the Holy One hasn't done it?

Surely the Holy One GOD will do nothing,

unless he reveals his secret to his servants the prophets.

*The lion has roared. Who will not fear?
The Holy One GOD has spoken. Who can but prophesy?*

[A] By way of review, for what sins was the Holy One going to bring judgment upon *B'nei Yisrael* [the children of Israel]?

[B] The Holy One asks in verse 3 “*Do two walk together except they be agreed*” [Amplified, “*Do two walk together except they make an agreement and have agreed?*”] What do you think the Holy One is talking about?

[C] There have been many great judgments spoken about in Scripture. See, for instance, Genesis 6:1 and following [the great flood], Genesis 18:17 and following [S'dom and G'morrah], Genesis 41:30 [the 7-year famine of Yosef's time], Exodus 7:1 and following [the ten plagues on Egypt in the time of Moshe], Jonah 1:2, and 3:4 [the destruction of Nineveh], etc. In each case, the Holy One announced to someone what He was intending to do, and why. Why do you think the Holy One always tells someone when judgment is coming? What does that tell you about the Holy One's nature?

3. In this week's reading from the B'rit Chadasha Stephen - a Jewish believer in Messiah Y'shua - is making his final speech to the Sanhedrin, or Jewish ruling council - the speech for which he would very shortly be stoned to death. In today's verses, Stephen discusses the events of this week's parsha (and more).

*The patriarchs, moved with jealousy against Yosef, sold him into Mitzrayim.
The Holy One was with him,
and delivered him out of all his afflictions,
and gave him favor and wisdom before Par`oh, king of Mitzrayim.
He made him governor over Mitzrayim and all his house.
Now a famine came over all the land of Mitzrayim and Kana`an, and great affliction.
Our fathers found no food. But when Ya`akov heard that there was grain in Mitzrayim,
he sent out our fathers the first time.*

*On the second time Yosef was made known to his brothers,
and Yosef's race was revealed to Par`oh.
Yosef sent, and summoned Ya`akov, his father, and all his relatives, seventy-five souls.
Ya`akov went down into Mitzrayim, and he died,
himself and our fathers, and they were brought back to Shechem,
and laid in the tomb that Avraham bought for a price in silver
from the sons of Hamor of Shechem.*

[A] What does Stefanos say led Yosef's brothers to sell Yosef into slavery?

[B] In Strong's, look up the Greek word translated as “envy” in verse 9. Write the Greek word and its meaning.

[C] In verse 10 what two things does Stefanos say the Holy One gave to Yosef?

[D] In verse 11 Stefanos calls the judgment the Holy One imposed upon Egypt and Kena'an a "dearth" and an "affliction". Look up these two words in Strong's, and write the Greek words used and their definitions.

[E] Based upon what you found in response to the previous question, write a description of the conditions that existed in Kena'an during the time of the judgment that led to Ya'akov's move to Egypt.

[F] Is the information Stephen gives in verses 12-16 a completely accurate account of what is described in the Torah concerning those subjects? What discrepancies if any do you find between Stephen's account and what Torah describes? [Hint: For one discrepancy, see Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:1-5; compare Acts 7:14]

*May you hear the voice of the Holy One,
daily in the words of Torah and nightly by means of your dreams.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 35:17-28

*Lord, how long will you look on? Rescue my soul from their destruction,
My precious life from the lions
I will give you thanks in the great assembly. I will praise you among many people.
Don't let those who are my enemies wrongfully rejoice over me;
Neither let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause.
For they don't speak shalom,
But they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land.
Yes, they opened their mouth wide against me.
They said, "Aha! Aha! **Our eye has seen it!**"*

*You have seen it, O Holy One. Don't keep silent. Lord, don't be far from me.
Wake up! Rise up to defend me, my God! My Lord, contend for me!
Vindicate me, Holy One my God, according to your righteousness;
Don't let them gloat over me.
Don't let them say in their heart, "Aha! That's the way we want it!"
Don't let them say, "**We have swallowed him up!**"*

*Let them be disappointed and confounded together who rejoice at my calamity.
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor
who magnify themselves against me.
Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause.
Yes, let them say continually, "**May the Holy One be magnified,
Who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servant!**"*

My tongue will talk about your righteousness and about your praise all day long.