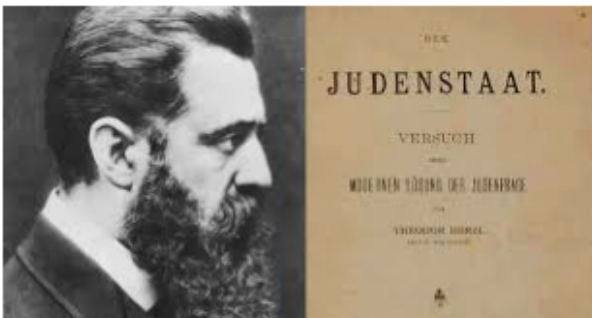


Miketz

December 16, 2017

הָלוֹם חֲלַמְתִּי, וּפְתִיר אֵין אֲתוֹ; וְאֲנִי, שָׁמַעְתִּי עֲלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר, תִּשְׁמַע הָלוֹם, לְפִתֵר אֲתוֹ

Genesis 41:15 *I have dreamed a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you are able to interpret it.*



The story of Joseph occupies 14 of the 50 chapters of the book of Genesis, about half of the narrative that centers on biblical ancestors. While Joseph is the descendant of the patriarch Jacob, and is so prominently featured in the Torah, he never gains the status of patriarch himself. So, why does the Bible dedicate so many chapters to Joseph's story?

Joseph is clearly gifted. He is not only a dreamer, he is an interpreter of dreams. And though the Bible connects Joseph's and Pharaoh's dreams to Divine will, G-d is never explicitly revealed to Joseph — not even in his dreams, as was the case for his father Jacob. Furthermore, unlike the other patriarchs, Joseph does not build altars or offer sacrifices to G-d. Rather, Joseph is an ordinary person who does extraordinary things to advance the Jewish people and redirect the course of Jewish history. Recognizing his importance to the narrative and subsequent journey of the Jewish people, the biblical author(s), Divine, human or a combination of the two, chose to make Joseph a headliner.

On [May 2, 1860](#), another dreamer was born, and he too changed the course of Jewish history. Theodor Herzl is referred to in Hebrew as חוֹזֵה הַמְּדִינָה, *Chozeh HaMedinah*, which translates to "Visionary of the State." He was born to a secular family in Pest, Hungary. His mother doted on him and encouraged him to dream of himself as one who would achieve great things. According to biographers, Herzl considered himself an atheist. The family moved to Vienna, where Herzl studied law, attained his doctorate, and, after a few years in practice, gave it up to become a full time writer. Herzl wrote numerous articles, plays, and novels but most did not contain any significant reference to Jews or Judaism.

Like Joseph, Herzl traveled extensively, in his case throughout the cities of Europe. In 1891, Herzl became the Paris correspondent for the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* (*New Free Press*) which at the time was the most distinguished newspaper in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Though he had encountered numerous anti-Semitic incidents in college and his early career, a significant turning point for Herzl came when he covered the 1894 arrest and trial of the French Jewish military captain Alfred Dreyfus. Falsely accused of passing military secrets to Germany, Dreyfus was found guilty of treason and after 5 years in prison and numerous petitions and retrials was finally exonerated in 1906. Seeing the unprecedented swells of anti-Semitism in France unleashed by the Dreyfus trial had a profound impact on Herzl. His Zionist dream was kindled.

In 1896, Herzl published [The Jewish State](#), calling upon Jews to obtain their own territory, to create institutions and forums to oversee Jewish immigration and settlement in this new territory, and to ultimately create their own state. The following year, in 1897, Herzl convened the [First Zionist Congress](#) in Basle, Switzerland. The 200 delegates to the Congress adopted a resolution stating that “the aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a homeland in Palestine secured by public law.”

Herzl spent the remaining years of his life traveling and meeting with various political leaders and [heads of state](#) in order to secure a charter for a Jewish national home. In addition to creating the World Zionist Organization, Herzl helped to found the Jewish Colonial Trust in 1899 and the Jewish National Fund in 1901. He died on July 3, 1904 at the age of forty-one from heart disease and pneumonia.

The biblical Joseph dreamed himself and his brothers as sheaves of wheat. The brothers bow before Joseph, who was of elevated status. That particular dream ultimately leads Joseph to secure food for his family and the region during a seven-year famine that was soon to unfold, "for it was on account of grain that Josef was elevated to the position of governor" (*Radak, 13th century, Provence*). Herzl, too, became an instrument for Jewish survival—by catalyzing the Zionist dream and leading others to believe that the Jews needed a land of their own to secure their own destiny.

Discussion Questions:

1. How was Herzl, like Joseph, both a dreamer and the interpreter?
2. What did Herzl interpret that led him to move forward with his Zionist dream? (Both the event and the socio-political climate surrounding the Dreyfus affair would be a great place to start!)
3. What current events might lead modern day visionaries to persist with the Zionist dream? (Some would see the need to persist as a necessary reaction to negative circumstances of Jews around the world. Others might see the contributions that modern Israeli society has made to the world in a relatively short time span and wish for continued success. Still others will see that from their religious standpoint, be it orthodox or progressive, Israel must exist as a light to other nations.)
4. Herzl was a political Zionist unlike cultural Zionist Ahad Ha'am, socialist Zionist AD Gordon, or religious Zionist Rabbi Kook. Taking any of these men and comparing the varieties of Zionism they envisioned would be useful in understanding the divergent philosophies that typified the Zionist movement at its origins. Zionism to each of these was an effort to fulfill a dream, but each had a different path or interpretation along which that dream's fulfillment would take place. Why didn't these variations cause a small movement at its foundations to splinter apart? How did these variations of Zionism ultimately exist alongside one another?

Additional References:

Spielberg Jewish Film Archive at Hebrew University, online films:

- “Theodor Herzl: A Living Portrait”. Filmed [1960], YouTube Video, 55:05. Posted [March 2010]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWi3pV8_XOY
- “Theodor Herzl: Father of the Jewish State”. Filmed [1960], YouTube Video, 12:02. Posted [March 2010]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47tgrvMWbRg>
- “Re-Internment of Theodor Herzl”. Filmed [1949], YouTube Video, 03:49. Posted [August 2014]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulBs8JU5i8s>
- “Nine Years of Herzl”. Filmed [1954], YouTube Video, 17:07. Posted [March 2010]. (Hebrew) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NucgvwFwPdE>