

WHAT IS LIFE WITHOUT A DREAM?

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Gen. 37:1-4a, 25-33, 41:1, 50:19-21

Last evening I traveled to Temple B'nai B'rith in Kingston, to experience once again the joyful and inspiring musical – JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT. The performance was wonderful! Of course the subject was FIRST RATE! How could you go wrong with such great material?! In addition, the music so beautifully captures the multiple moods and movements that the Joseph story narrates.

Joseph was a quite the dreamer! He may have lacked humility (especially in his youth), but he never gave up on his dream to do his best in his life! And that BEST included the BEST for his family, his people, his nation! And wedding this great ancient story to our Christian faith and the ensuing centuries – I confidently express that this DREAMER STORY has taken on universal significance!

We all dream, and we all DREAM! Years ago, when I was eleven or twelve, I had a dream that my parents gave me a motorcycle. The next morning when I got out of bed – the first thing I did was look outside to admire my new motorcycle. (My dream was so real – I actually believed I had a motorcycle!) I recall, it took me a few moments to become reoriented to reality. I was probably a bit short with my mother that day. She would not have realized that she failed to give me my motorcycle.

We all dream. Most of our dreams we don't remember - but we do dream. Over the years my daughter Victoria has enjoyed hearing about my "off the wall dreams." We dream through the nights. We also dream in other ways. These are the awake dreams, and they are extremely important.

We dream of becoming a fireman, policeman, a professor, a movie star, a scientist, a professional golfer (Well, maybe not). We dream of meeting Mr. Right or Mrs. Right. We dream of making our mark.

Some dreams - happen. Some don't.

But - we continue to dream, to hope. That's who we are. We take the "stuff of life," and by God's grace we form it and shape it, we imagine it - into something new. We dream it into existence. With sweat, and perseverance and stamina we dream it into life.

Edmond Rostand of Cyrano de Bergerac fame, wrote: ***"What is life, without a dream?"***

As I first read Rostand's words - I felt an intuitive assent... "Yes, Yes - that's it; Let go of all that pragmatism. Loosen up - logic can take you only so far."

Do not be fooled - **Dreams make a difference!** For some dreams are aspirations! Hopeful visions!

They have changed the course of history.

They have changed the lives of millions. And as individuals dreams have changed and fulfilled our lives.

There have been some beautiful dreamers on this earth. One such dreamer is found in the latter chapters of Genesis. This is part of the wonderful epic of early Israel. The story draws us in . . .

Jacob (Israel) lives in the land of his birth. He also was a dreamer (but that's another story – stay tuned). No doubt his dream for his family, his people was often overheard, and directly heard by his children. By all means, the Israel family were DREAMERS! And one of Israel's sons was quite a dreamer. Joseph – the reamer and interpreter of dreams. Oh, and Joseph was father's favorite! Even back then some had their favorites. Jacob (Israel) loved Joseph more than the other children (the Smother's brothers in sandals, for those of you old enough to catch the reference).

The young man, Joseph, was out with his brothers, shepherding the flock, and Joseph runs to Daddy and tells on his brothers. (Like father, like son?) Israel also gave Joseph a beautiful garment that made him stand out above the other brothers.

The brothers hated Joseph! Wow – extreme sibling rivalry!

Joseph had numerous dreams and he shared them with his brothers. Basically the dreams were vignettes of how Joseph was going to rule over his brothers and even his father. My guess is that Joseph had an exceptionally large ego.

Well, of course his "revelation" - made his brothers love him and beg him to....."Please lord over us now! We can't wait! Be our wise king!" Look down on us for we are inferior! Oh, wise brother." Not quite!

"...they hated him yet more for his dreams and for his words."

You know. Dreams can do that. Dreams and visions often extract a price, a high price.

A few days later the "boys" - were working in the fields. Dad sends Joseph out to check up on them. The brothers conspire to kill Joseph. They change their minds, and instead sell him to a group traveling to Egypt.

There, they are rid of him!

Of course Jacob is crushed, when they say that Joseph was killed. His favorite Son - Dead! Jacob would not be comforted over this loss. "I shall go down to sheol (the grave) to my Son, mourning."

Meanwhile, Joseph is again sold, this time to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. Joseph became extremely successful. But, trouble was brewing. Apparently in his day, Joseph was the Chris Hemsworth, George Clooney, Frank Sinatra type (depending on your generation). Potiphar's wife was interested in him. Joseph being a moral person refused her advances. (Perhaps, this is the

first recorded case of sexual harassment.) She then lies about Joseph and he is thrown into prison. During his incarceration he interprets the dreams of two prisoners.

Pharaoh is troubled by a dream, and no one can interpret it. Word is given to Pharaoh that a Hebrew prisoner interprets dreams. Pharaoh sends for Joseph. Pharaoh describes the dream. Joseph tells him that 7 good years are coming, followed by 7 years of famine. "You must prepare for the years of famine. Appoint someone to do this important work for you and your nation."

Wonders of wonders - Pharaoh sets Joseph to the task. He is second only to Pharaoh.

The famine arrives and all the land is parched and hunger goes beyond the borders of Egypt. Egypt became the bread basket of the world. Joseph saves Egypt!

Jacob (Israel) has heard of Egypt's bounty and sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain - so they might live. Joseph - his Father's Son - plays a trick on his brothers. They don't recognize him, and the game is a foot. After much anxiety on the brothers' part, and a bit of humor on Joseph's part -- Joseph reveals himself to his brothers.

The whole family of Israel is brought down to Egypt. They are saved. In this epic story, the Nation of Israel is saved because of this dreamer! Here is not a perfect human being, but here is a person open to dreaming of what can be. Jacob is reunited with his son. His mourning stops, and he rejoices. The dreamer has brought life, out of death. The years of famine, the years of death, do not destroy them, because of a Dreamer.

Today we are in desperate need of dreamers – to fulfill their individual potentials, to fulfill societal potentials – for just and responsible nations!

We need to weave together our common patterns of what a just society is. We need to dream it into existence: To make the dream come true! Our Judeo-Christian possesses the needed material to bring this about. One piece of the guide is the story of Joseph!

WHAT IS LIFE WITHOUT A DREAM?!

This past Monday, Shawn and I stood at the Lincoln Memorial in our Capital, Washington D.C. I confess, it was an emotional moment. Looking up at the Great Emancipator depicted in marble and 19 feet in height, with two great speeches (The Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address) chiseled in stone to his left and right – Americans and others throughout the world (who know something about history), could only be moved and inspired by the DREAM of equality and justice that here is represented!

As I turned to begin to go down the steps, my mind took me back to another dreamer who stood here at the Lincoln Memorial, and declared a fulfillment for an American promissory note to all Americans, and a fulfilled dream of equality. It's not the color of our skin, it's the content of our character!

Fifty-five years ago, this August 28, a black man stood Lincoln Memorial, facing 250,000 fellow Americans and delivered a speech/sermon that rang out to our nation – like the early colonialists' shot

heard round the world. He knew his Bible. He knew of great dreamers such as Joseph. He quotes from the Bible.

"I Have A Dream," Martin Luther King, Jr. - cried out: I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed - we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.

I have a dream my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today!"

If you have not recently heard Dr. King's speech/sermon, I would urge you to go to YouTube experience it again for its power and persuasion. Dr. King concluding his sermon - produces a stirring cadence by the continued use of Let Freedom Ring. Let Freedom Ring.

"And when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and hamlet, from every state and city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children - black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants - will be able to join hands and to sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last, free at last; thank God Almighty, we are free at last."

Martin Luther King derived his Dream from the pages of the Bible.

"What is life without a dream?"

Nothing - Joseph knew it, King knew it, We know it.

Life with the dream of God's love and justice – it is everything!

Amen.