

## Rabbi Wexler – December 15, 2022 – *Vayeshev*

The book of Genesis is filled with stories of dreams. And this week's Torah portion, *Vayeshev*, is certainly no exception. As it opens, we meet Joseph, and learn that he, like his father (Jacob). Joseph's story begins with him sharing his childhood dreams with his brothers, and *Vayeshev* ends with Joseph correctly interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker, leading to his release from Egyptian prison.

Dreams have always been a powerful tool for Jewish survival, continuity, and flourishing. Theodor Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, is a wonderful exemplar of what it means to dream. In 1897, just after his First Zionist Congress had concluded, Herzl wrote in his diary: "At Basle I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty years, everyone will perceive it." They did. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations voted to authorize the establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Israel.

Now, Herzl was not the first to advocate for renewed Jewish political sovereignty in our homeland. But he was certainly a visionary, and his momentous efforts laid a foundation for the realization of our people's dream. Herzl is remembered by his powerful and perhaps most famous teaching: "*if you will it, it is no dream.*" Joseph and then Herzl taught us all that dreams are important and powerful, but only inasmuch as we look to activate them; to turn them into reality.

Hanukkah is a time for dreaming. When we light the Hanukkah candles each night, we fulfill a several thousand-year-old dream of the Maccabees—that the Jewish people would not only survive but thrive and that we would continue to dedicate ourselves to peoplehood, faith, and God. This Hanukkah, each night as you light your candles, I encourage you to take some time to take in the light and reflect on your dreams. What are your greatest dreams and hopes for the future? And what are you going to do in the weeks and months ahead to transform them into reality? Remember, *if you will it, it is no dream.*

I will be reflecting on these questions as I light the Hanukkiyah each night next week in Israel. On Saturday night, Cantor Cohen, Jared Kaufman, John Imhof, and I are heading to Israel with twenty-two of our HaMakom teens. We will join up with teens from Beth El and from Philly and altogether we will lead forty-seven teens through an inspiring two-week trip throughout Israel. To be in Israel has been a dream for many generations, a dream that is now reality with Israel serving as a homeland for the Jewish people. But being in Israel this Hanukkah will be extra sweet as we had to postpone our Confirmation Israel Trip for the past two years due to the Pandemic. Finally, for the first time in three years, our TBS teens return to Israel, a trip that many of them have been dreaming about for a long time. *If you will it, it is no dream.*

May we continue to not only dream big, but to dedicate ourselves to working each day to ensure that our hopes and dreams become reality.

Shabbat Shalom and an early Hag Urim Sameah.