

JOSEPH'S DREAM

By RABBI HERBERT BAUMGARD

AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT JOSEPH DREAMED A DREAM. AND RISING IN THE MORNING, JOSEPH RAN TO HIS FATHER, AND HE SAID, "FATHER, I HAVE DREAMED THE STRANGEST DREAM". AND JOSEPH RAN TO EACH OF HIS BROTHERS, AND HE SAID, "COME, MY BROTHERS, LISTEN TO THE STORY OF MY DREAM". AND THEY GATHERED EACH OF THEM ABOUT JOSEPH AS HE SPOKE.

"I DREAMED", SAID JOSEPH, "OF THE DARKEST NIGHT, AND YET OF A NIGHT WHICH WAS NOT STILL. FOR MEN WERE AT WAR KILLING AND MAIMING ONE ANOTHER. ON AND ON WENT THE KILLING SEEMINGLY WITHOUT END. UNTIL, SUDDENLY, THE DARK HEAVENS/ WERE SPLIT BY THUNDER SUCH AS I HAVE NEVER HEARD, AND I WAS BLINDED BY LIGHTNING SUCH AS I HAVE NEVER SEEN. WHEN I HAD RESTED MY EYES, I COULD SEE THAT THE FIGHTING WAS NO MORE, AND THERE WAS A HEAVY STILLNESS IN THE NIGHT, A QUIETNESS THAT WAS EXPECTANT, AS IF WAITING TO HEAR IF THE FIGHTERS WOULD COME AGAIN.

"IT WAS THEN THAT I SAW THEM LYING ON THE GROUND, TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SHREDDED BODIES WHICH ONCE WERE HUMAN BEINGS. WHOLE CITIES LAY WASTE, AND ONLY DUST REMAINED WHERE ONCE MAJESTIC BUILDINGS STOOD. IT WAS A MIRACLE OF DESTRUCTION AS GREAT AS IF GOD HAD DROWNED AN ARMY BY SPLITTING THE SEA, EXCEPT THAT GOD HAD SPLIT NOT THE SEA BUT THE HEAVENS!"

HIS BROTHERS LOOKED AT JOSEPH WITH SCORN. SURRILY, JOSEPH DID NOT KNOW WHEREOF HE SPOKE. HOW COULD A MAN DREAM SUCH A FANTASTIC DREAM? DID HE THINK THEY WERE FOOLS TO BELIEVE HIM? BUT JOSEPH PAID NO HEED TO THEIR ACCUSING GLANCES, AND HE WENT ON WITH HIS STORY.

"SO GREAT WAS THE VISION", SAID JOSEPH, "THAT I COULD NOT FULLY GRASP THE MEANING OF WHAT I HAD SEEN. AND IN MY DREAM, I RAN TO OUR FATHER, JACOB, AND I BEGGED OF HIM THAT HE IN HIS WISDOM SHOULD TELL ME THE MEANING OF WHAT I HAD SEEN, FOR IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT NONE CAN TELL THE

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MEANING OF HIS OWN DREAM. AND I SAT AT MY FATHER'S FEET AS HE TOLD ME THESE THINGS:

"JOSEPH", SAID OUR FATHER, "THERE WILL COME TO MANKIND A NEW WEAPON OF UNBELIEVABLE POWER. WITH IT, MEN WILL BE ABLE TO DESTROY CITIES AND NATIONS. WITH IT, WE COULD LEAVE NOT A TRACE OF AN ENTIRE PEOPLE. SO EXPLOSIVE A FORCE WILL IT BE THAT ITS WIDESPREAD USE IN A WAR WILL MEAN THE END OF TIME AS WE KNOW IT. THIS IS ONE MEANING OF YOUR DREAM, JOSEPH, BUT THERE IS ALSO ANOTHER MEANING."

"THIS NEW POWER IF USED RIGHTLY, CAN DO GOD'S WILL ON EARTH. IT CAN BRING THE GREATEST OF LUXURIES WITHIN THE REACH OF THE POOREST OF MEN. IT CAN MEAN THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE ON EARTH. MEN WILL NO LONGER LABOR LONG HOURS IN THE FIELD AND IN THE SHOP. RATHER WILL MEN DEVOTE THEIR LABOR TO THE KINDLING OF THE DIVINE SPARK WITHIN THE HUMBLEST OF MEN, FOR OUR FATHERS SAY THAT THE SPARK IS CAPABLE OF A GROWTH BEYOND OUR MOST PERVENT PRAYERS".

"AND THEN", SAID JOSEPH, "OUR FATHER, JACOB, LOOKED HEAVENWARD AS HE SAID, 'AND THE ILLITERATE SHALL BECOME LEARNED MEN, AND DISEASE SHALL BE DISSOLVED FOREVER, AND NONE SHALL WANT, AND NONE SHALL FEAR, AND EACH SHALL HAVE HIS SAY IN THE GOVERNING OF THINGS'".

THEN JOSEPH PAUSED IN THE TELLING OF HIS DREAM, AND HE LOOKED ABOUT TO SEE IF HIS BROTHERS WOULD UNDERSTAND. THERE WAS DISBELIEF IN THEIR EYES. BUT RUBEN, THE ELDEST, ASKED THIS QUESTION, "AND WHAT, MY BROTHER, DID THE DREAM TELL OF THE USE OF THIS NEW POWER? SHALL IT BE USED TO DESTROY THE WORLD OR TO REBUILD IT?"

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AND JOSEPH SLOWLY ANSWERED, "OF THESE MATTERS MY DREAM DID NOT SPEAK."

AND SO IT WAS THAT JOSEPH'S BROTHERS LEFT HIM ALONE, AND THEY WERE MURMURING UNDER THEIR BREATH AS THEY DEPARTED.

AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT JOSEPH DREAMED ANOTHER DREAM. AND JOSEPH CAME RUNNING AGAIN UNTO HIS BROTHERS AND HIS FATHER, AND HE SAID, "HEAR, I PRAY YOU, THIS DREAM WHICH I HAVE DREAMED". UNWILLING WERE THE BROTHERS TO LISTEN, BUT JACOB MADE THEM DO SO. AND WHEN THEY WERE ALL SEATED AROUND JOSEPH, HE BEGAN AGAIN, SAYING:

"I DREAMED OF A NIGHT DARKER THAN THE FIRST. I DREAMED OF LONELINESS, AND WEARINESS, AND THE HOMELESSNESS OF A PEOPLE. LOST WERE THESE PEOPLE, FOR THEY WERE FLEEING FROM OPPRESSION, AND THEY KNEW NOT WHERE THEY WERE GOING, SAVE THAT THEY MUST GO ON. ENCAMPED WERE THEY ABOUT A HUGE MOUNTAIN WHICH WAS RINGED BY A HEAVY MIST, SO THAT THE MOUNTAIN TOP COULD NOT BE SEEN. STILL THE PEOPLE GAZED UPWARD TOWARDS THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN AS IF THEY COULD SEE THROUGH THE MIST TO WHAT WAS BEYOND, AS IF THEY WERE HOPING FOR SOMETHING TO BE BORN OUT OF ALL THAT FORMLESSNESS.

"THE PEOPLE GAZED UPWARDS AS THEY WAITED, AND THE WAIT WAS A LONG ONE. EVEN THE MOST PATIENT WERE SOONER TRIED, AND EVEN THE STRONGEST WERE EXHAUSTED. STILL THEY WAITED AND THEY LOOKED UPWARD THROUGH THE MIST. AND LO AND BEHOLD, AS IF THEIR PRAYERS HAD CREATED WHAT THEY SO PAINFULLY HAD SOUGHT, A SIMPLE MAN IN A WHITE ROBE CAME OUT OF THE MIST AND DOWN THE MOUNTAIN SIDE, PRESSING CLOSE TO HIS HEART TWO TABLETS OF STONE ON WHICH WERE ENGRAVED A MESSAGE AND AS HE LABORED DOWNWARD, THE PEOPLE ROSE AND WENT TO THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN TO GREET HIM.

"IN ALL OF THIS DREAM, " SAID JOSEPH, "THERE WAS LITTLE OF SOUND. BUT SO STIRRING WERE THE EMOTIONS OF THE PEOPLE THAT MY SOUL FELT AS IF IT

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WERE IN A VISION. AND THEN THE WHITE ROBED FIGURE CAME OUT OF THE MIST, THE VISION MELTED, AND MY SOUL RUSHED UP TO EMBRACE HIM.

"AGAIN," SAID JOSEPH, "I COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAD SEEN. AND IN MY DREAM, I RAN ONCE MORE TO OUR FATHER, JACOB, TO LEARN THE MEANING OF THE VISION. AND OUR FATHER SAID THIS TO ME:

"JOSEPH", HE SAID, "THERE WILL COME TO MANKIND AN UNBELIEVABLE POWER WHICH DWELLS IN THE HEART OF GOD AND IN THE THINGS HE BLESSES WITH HIS PRESENCE. WITH THIS POWER A POOR MAN CAN BE MADE A KING, AND THE MURDERER CAN BE MADE A SAINT. WITH THIS POWER, SWORDS CAN BE BEATEN INTO PLOUGH-SHARES, AND FOOLS TRANSFORMED INTO WISE MEN. THE ETHIOPIAN AND THE FAIREST OF MEN SHALL KNOW BY THIS POWER THAT THEY ARE BROTHERS. THOSE IN THE HIGH PLACES AND THOSE IN THE LOW PLACES, SHALL COME TO KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOT MORE THAN A HAND'S BREATH APART. AND BY THIS POWER MEN SHALL KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOT COMPLETE IN THEMSELVES BUT TIED ONE TO ANOTHER AND BOUND TOGETHER FOREVER. CITIES SHALL PROSPER UNDER THIS POWER ALONE, AND NATIONS SHALL GROW STRONG ONLY INsofar AS THEY USE IT. AND MEN SHALL LIVE AND MEN SHALL DIE ACCORDINGLY AS THEY USE THIS POWER".

"THEN IN MY DREAM", SAID JOSEPH, "I ASKED OUR FATHER JACOB IF THIS POWER WERE INDEED SOMETHING NEW AND UNHEARD OF BY MEN BEFORE. AND JACOB ANSWERED ME SAYING, 'MY SON, JOSEPH, THIS WEAPON IS BOTH NEW AND OLD. IT IS AS OLD AS ABRAHAM AND AS NEW AS THE FIRST BLADE OF GRASS THAT HERALDS THE SPRINGTIME. IT IS AS OLD AS ISAAC AND AS NEW AS THE SUDDEN SURGING WITHIN A MAN TO RAISE UP THE WEAK AND BEAT DOWN THE WICKED. AS NEW AND AS OLD IS THIS POWER AS THE CREATIVE LOVE THAT BURSTS FROM ETERNITY INTO ETERNITY, LIKE A SHOOTING STAR THAT FALLS FROM WORLD TO WORLD AND NEVER RESTS".

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IT WAS HERE THAT THE BROTHERS STOPPED JOSEPH THE DREAMER AND SAID UNTO HIM, "YOU HAVE SPOKEN TO US, OH BROTHER, OF TWO STRANGE POWERS IN THE WORLD. BUT DID NOT YOUR DREAMS TELL WHICH WOULD CONQUER AND HOW THESE POWERS WOULD BE USED?"

AND JOSEPH SLOWLY ANSWERED, "OF THESE MATTERS MY DREAMS DID NOT SPEAK". ONCE AGAIN THE BROTHERS BEGAN TO MUMUR AMONGST THEMSELVES, AND THEY WERE DEPARTING WHEN JACOB, THE FATHER, ADDRESSED THEM ALL SAYING, "BEHOLD, MY SONS, THE DREAMS OF JOSEPH HAVE LESSONS FOR ALL OF US. HOW THESE WEAPONS AND OTHER GIFTS OF GOD SHALL BE USED, NONE CAN SAY. BUT THIS MUCH WE KNOW, AS THEY ARE FROM GOD, SO THEY MUST BE USED AS GOD'S WEAPONS OR WE PERISH!"