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Extracted from The Stuff that Dreams are Made of by Rabbi Stephen Carr Reuben

Everyone has dreams. Some of us dream of heights we intend to scale, battles we intend to win, glories we intend to capture. Some of us dream of love, or riches, or fame, or the quenching of our deepest desires. Some dreams are vast, and deep, and dramatic, and others are simple, and quiet, and modest.

But regardless of their size or nature, we all have had dreams that inspired our actions and gave a sense of urgency to our lives.

So this week in the Torah we read about Pharaoh and his disturbing dreams. We read the well-known hero tale of Joseph who while languishing in prison is successful in interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh's baker (predicting he will be killed) and cup-bearer (predicting that he will be reinstated to his royal position). It is this very cup-bearer who brings Joseph to the attention of Pharaoh after the magicians of his court are unable to satisfactorily interpret the dreams that have disturbed his sleep.

The most important lesson that our rabbis have passed down from one generation to the next for thousands of years, is that the power of a dream lies with its interpretation and not with the dream itself. For when Joseph hears of the Pharaoh's dreams of seven lean cows eating seven fat cows, and seven thin ears of grain swallowing seven fat ears of grain, he could have come up with any number of interpretations. Instead, he chose to interpret the dreams in a way that would make his own counsel invaluable to Pharaoh and insure a place of power for himself in the royal court.

It is like the ancient fable of the king who asks a soothsayer to tell his future. The soothsayer replies, "O King, I see all of your children dying before you." The king was so upset by this prediction that he had the soothsayer killed on the spot. Then he asked the

local rabbi to come and reveal his future. The rabbi said, “O king, I see you flourishing in your kingdom, happy, old, and wise – in fact you will live such a long life that you will even outlive your own children.”

The king was so pleased with this prediction that he gave the rabbi a gift of enough gold to last a lifetime.

The facts were the same; the difference was in the interpretation. So it was with Joseph and the wisdom with which he interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams. Perhaps that is why the king refers to Joseph as “*ish asher ruakh elohim bo*” – “A man with the spirit of God within him.” God is the power that inspires within us faith in ourselves, faith in the future, and faith in our own abilities to use our own minds to make our dreams a reality.