Jewish Tribune – Vayeishev

**Dreaming**

We are all familiar with the dreams of the butler and the baker. The butler dreamed of once again making wine for Pharo and the baker dreamed that birds were eating from a basket of bread that was perched on his head.

Yosef interpreted the butler’s dream that in three days he would be returned to his post. The interpretation of the baker’s dream is less positive. In three days’, Pharo would hang him and the birds would eat his flesh.

But how did Yosef know to interpret the butler’s dream positively and the baker’s dream negatively?

I once heard an illuminating answer from Dayan Ehrentreu (he should have a refua shleima b’korov).

In his dream, the butler was active. He was busy taking grapes, squeezing them and serving wine to Pharo. In contrast, the baker was passive; standing totally still.

In life, it is important to have dreams, but it is more important to do something about our dreams, to actively pursue them.

Dayan Ehrentreu explains that Yosef knew that dreams are only meaningful if we act on them. Having grand dreams and not doing anything about them is tragic.

One of the challenges of life in the 21st century is the hectic pace of life. The Mesilas Yeshorim writes that one of the strategies of the yetzer hora is “tichbad ho’avoda” – to pre-occupy us so that we lose focus on things that matter.

The Ramchal wrote this 300 years ago. What would he say about life nowadays? With all the technological advances of modern times, we have more and more machinery and gadgets and less and less time.

Imagine you went back in time and spoke to a woman who would dedicate a day a week to do her laundry in the local river. You explain to her that in the future, we will have machines that not only do the washing but dry the clothes too. You describe how chickens are bought in shops and you just need to cook them. And then you tell her about freezers, air conditioners and online shopping.

No doubt she will be in a state of wonder at these seemingly Messianic times. “And what do people do with all the time saved?” she will ask. “How will they fill their days?”

Try explaining to her that one of the biggest challenges of modern life is struggling to find time. And yet…

Less time means less time to dream. I have the privilege of speaking in Beis (the Hasmonean kodesh programme for boys in years 11-13) every Friday morning and then at the girls’ school assembly. I try hard not to take the car and rather walk between the two sites and call it my weekly thinking time. Dream time.

What would I do if a generous benefactor wanted to give £10 million pounds to Hasmonean? What would I do with that money? What would I do if I could employ another dozen kodesh staff and informal educators? How could they best be deployed?

A famous story is told of the great Ponovezher Rov, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman ztl.

Having lost everything and survived the Second World War, the Ponovezher Rov came to Eretz Yisroel and dreamed of rebuilding his yeshiva. One day, when walking on the hill that would eventually house his yeshiva, he animatedly described to those with him how he envisaged where the Beis Hamedrash would be as well the dormitories, shiur rooms and kitchens.

Surprised by the grandeur of his plans, many felt he was dreaming. The Ponovezher Rov exclaimed: “I may be dreaming but I am wide awake!”

In these parshiyos, replete with dreams, Yosef Hatzaddik is teaching us that it is important to dream, but it is more important to do something about our dreams and to actively pursue them.

**Rabbi Golker is the** **Menahel of Hasmonean High School. To listen to his shiurim, go to TorahAnytime.com or JewishPodcasts.Org**