

# “Do not Mock our Dreamers”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Dreams dominate Genesis, the first book of the bible. At the outset of the human journey we dreamed our way to the world.

Joseph's dreams in youth brought him to the Egyptian dungeon; they evoked the jealousy of his brothers. His skill interpreting Pharaoh's dreams liberated him. As Rabbi Isaac Bernstein teaches us, Joseph was brought low by listening only to his own dreams, and rose high when he began to listen to the dreams of others. As with Jacob, his father, fleeting visions of the night enchant the dawn and change the world.

When after many years he meets his brothers again, the brothers who sold him into slavery, we read, “Joseph recognized his brothers, though they did not recognize him. And he remembered his dreams.” (Gen. 42:8,9) As Aviva Zornberg points out, when Joseph sees his brothers after so long, his first memory is not of their cruelty but of his dreams.

Genesis stands as an answer to those who would belittle or dismiss the power of dreams. More than two thousand years later the poet Heine may have had Joseph in mind when he wrote in his *English Fragments*: “Sir, do not mock our dreamers ... Their words become the seeds of freedom.”