

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter IX: Vayeishev (Gen. 37:1–40:23)

### Essay 7. How Joseph's brothers felt about his dreams

**פסוק** "וַיַּרְאָה מֵהֵיְהוּי תְלִמְתּוֹ, "פִּירֵשׁ רִשׁ"י הַמִּקְרָא הַזֶּה אוֹמֵר דְּרִשְׁנֵי נְכוֹ' שְׂאֵי אֶפְשָׁר שְׂיֵאמְרוּ הֵם "וַיַּרְאָה מֵהֵיְהוּי תְלִמְתּוֹ" עכ"ל. קִשָּׁה וְהֵלֵא מִנְהַג הָעוֹלָם כִּי הוּא שְׂפָשָׁאֲחַר מִגְזִים לְחִבְרֵי, חֲבִירוֹ מְשִׁיב לוֹ לְמִתָּר אֲנִי הוֹרֵג אוֹתְךָ וַיַּרְאָה מֵה פֶחַ יֵשׁ בְּאוֹתָן אִיוּמִים וְגִזּוּמִים וְשַׁעֲשִׁית לִי.

There is a **verse**: “Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we can say, ‘A savage beast devoured him.’ **We will see what will come of his dreams!**” (Gen. 37:20). **Rashi explains**: “**This reading is speaking sarcastically, for it is impossible that they said with literal intent, ‘We will see what will come of his dreams,’** because their killing of him would have voided all of his dreams.” **It is hard** to understand Rashi’s point, **for isn’t it the custom of the world, i.e.,** doesn’t everyone know, **that when someone threatens his fellow, the fellow replies to him, “Tomorrow I will kill you, and then we will see what power there is in those intimidations and threats that you have made towards me.”** I.e., if the first man makes what the second man considers to be a serious threat against him, the second man may respond that he can defend himself, with his response including a sarcastic element. Is that what’s happening here? Did the brothers view Joseph’s dreams involving them as threats?

וְיֵשׁ לוֹמֵר שְׁעָקָר הַדְּיוּק שֶׁל רִשׁ"י הוּא מִדְּכַתִּיב "מֵהֵיְהוּי תְלִמְתּוֹ, " שֶׁהֵיָהּ לוֹ לוֹמֵר מֵהֵי תְלִמְתּוֹ. אֲלֵא וַדַּאי צָרִיךְ לוֹמֵר שְׂאֵחֵיו שֶׁל יוֹסֵף הָיוּ סוֹבְרִים שְׂאִין מִמֶּשׁ כָּלֵל בְּתִלְמוֹתָיו, אוֹ שְׂבָאוּ מִהֲרֵהוּרֵי לְבוֹ וְאֵינָם כְּלוּם, אוֹ שֶׁלֵּא תִלְם כָּלֵל, שְׂאֵם הִתְהַה לָהֶם סְבָרָא שְׂמֹן הַשָּׁמַיִם הָרָאוּ לוֹ אוֹתָן הַתְּלִמּוֹת, חָס וְשָׁלוֹם לֹא הָיוּ פּוֹשְׁטִים אֶת יְדֵיהֶם בּוֹ. אֲלֵא לְפִי סְבָרְתָם יוֹסֵף הוֹצִיא דְבָר רָעָה עֲלֵיהֶם וְהִסְפִּיר לְשׁוֹן הָרַע רָאוּי לְהַשְׁלִיכוֹ לְכַלְבִּים.

**It can be said that the Rashi’s precise point is that it is written, “Let us kill him and . . . we will see what will come of his dreams,” when it could have said, “Let us kill him and . . . we will see what came of his dreams.” Surely it must be said that Joseph’s brothers were thinking that there was nothing at all to his dreams, or that [the dreams] came from the thoughts of his heart and were nothing meaningful, or even that he had not dreamed at all and was lying about it. For if they’d had the understanding that these dreams had been shown to him from Heaven, then G-d forbid they wouldn’t have raised their hands against him. That**

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is, our view is that the brothers were righteous men, and they would have been respectful if they had understood G-d's plans. **Rather, according to their thinking, Joseph brought a bad report about them** to their father, as it says, "At seventeen years of age, Joseph tended the flocks with his brothers, as a helper to the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father" (Gen. 37:2). The rabbis attribute Joseph's actions to immaturity on his part, and that he misunderstood the brothers' actions and that they had not committed any wrong. The brothers felt that they were the injured party, **and** "Rav Sheshet further said, citing Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya: **Anyone who speaks slander**, and anyone who accepts and believes the slander he hears, and anyone who testifies falsely about another—it is fitting to throw him to the **dogs**" (Pesachim 118a). Thus we understand that they weren't thinking of killing Joseph to prevent his dreams from coming true, but rather they completely disregarded his dreams, and were instead upset by his slanderous reports to their father.

ומשום הכי אָמרו "לכו ונהרגוהו" וכו' "וְאָמְרָנוּ חֵיהָ רְעָה אֲכַלְתֵּהוּ", וְחִלּוּמוֹתָיו אֵין בָּהֶם מִמֶּשׁ שְׂאֵפִילוּ בְּלֹא הַרְיָגְתּוֹ לֹא הָיוּ חוֹשְׁשִׁים לָהֶם כָּלֵל וְכָלֵל. וְשִׁפִּיר קֶאֱמֵר, אִי אֶפְשָׁר שְׂיֵאמְרוּ הֵם "וְנִרְאָה מֵהֲיָהוּ חִלְמֵתּוֹ", שְׂאֵם הָיוּ אוֹמְרִים כִּד הָיָה נִרְאָה שְׂמִסְתַּפְקִים בְּאוֹתָם הַחִלּוּמוֹת וּמִן הַסֵּפֶק לֹא הָיָה לָהֶם לְשַׁלּוֹחַ יָדָם בּוֹ. וּמֵה שְׂסִיִּים, שְׂמִכְיִן שְׂיִהְרָגוּהוּ בְּטֹלוֹ חִלּוּמוֹתָיו, הַכִּי פִירוּשׁוֹ, שְׂמִכְיִן שְׂמִלְאוּ לָבָם וְיָדָם לְהַרוֹג אוֹתוֹ, פְּשִׁיטָא שְׂחֻשְׁבוּ שְׂחִלּוּמוֹתָיו בְּטֵלִים.

**Because of this, they said, “Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we can say, ‘A savage beast devoured him.’ ”** They said to themselves, **“There’s no reality in his dreams,” and even without killing him, they would not have feared [the dreams] at all.** With this interpretation, **what [Rashi] said is fine: It is impossible that they said** with literal intent, **“We will see what will come of his dreams,”** because **if they had said that and meant it, it would have appeared that they had doubts about the dreams,** i.e., that perhaps Joseph had experienced the dreams and perhaps they would come true. **From this doubt,** i.e., from the possibility that the dreams were true, **they would not have dared to raise their hands against him. What [Rashi] concluded was that because their killing of him would have voided all of his dreams, thus the meaning is** not be taken literally, which would be obvious, nor even as the sarcastic words of people concerned about a threat posed by Joseph's dreams, but rather **that since they filled their hearts and prepared their hands to kill him, it is obvious that they felt certain that his dreams were void.**

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