

From the Abravanel Jacob Solomon

With his brothers already on bad terms with him:

Yosef had a dream that he told to his brothers... "Behold, we were binding sheaves in the middle of the field... my sheaf arose and remained standing. Then your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers retorted: "Are you going to reign over us? Are you going to be our ruler?" So they hated him even more... (37:4-8)

Abravanel comments on Yosef's manner of presenting his dream to his brothers. He highlights the words: "My sheaf arose and remained standing", as suggesting that the forces enabling him to rise to power would be independent of the other sheaves. His sheaf would stand up; without asking permission from the other sheaves. Which implied that he would rule whether his family approved or not. What the brothers might feel was of no consequence. They would have no say in the matter.

And once the sheaf "arose", it would "remain standing". The S'forno observes that it would not sit down in a hurry. And indeed, Yosef appears to have been viceroy in Egypt from when he was thirty until his death eighty years later, a very long time.

There are two ways a person may rise to a dominant position. It may be by merit and the general goodwill and

acquiescence of the population. Had Yosef not got to his favoured position as Yaakov's favourite, but though the social and administrative skills that he was to employ with so much initial success in Potifar's household, it could have been a different matter. His charisma and efficiency might have eased him to the top on their own accord, without resentment from his brothers.

Yosef's dream, however, implied to his family that he would not "get there" on the value of service to his brothers and the wider community, but by forces that the brothers had no means of influencing. He would achieve dominance the second way, as an independent force, as an outsider rather than on the strength of being a valued member of the circle of brothers. The matter would be quite beyond their control. They would have no stake in their individual futures. The entire spiritual Patriarchal legacy so painstakingly built up by Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, would be out of their hands, independent of their own merits and positive qualities.

However, it was not clear whether "achieving dominance as an outsider" would happen by means of Yaakov's goodwill and at the brothers' expense or by means of patronage from another direction, and in a different context and environment.

That could be the detail of the dream that Yosef should have been less

precise in relating to his brothers. Though the dreams were (according to the Ramban) divine communications on future conduct, Yosef should have been more discreet in revealing the information, and avoid much fraternal strife.

A lesson for bearing in mind that "there is a time to speak and a time to remain quiet" (Kohelet 3:7). 🗨️