



## RABBI GROSSMAN ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA



### The Curtain has Risen Again Parshas Vayeshev

Drastic changes were occurring in the world in the 1980s. Mikhail Gorbachev was elected head of the USSR and set off a series of reforms, which subsequently led to the fall of the Iron Curtain.

After the historic event, I felt an urge to visit my fellow Jews, in the former communist country who had not encountered Judaism openly in some seven decades.

I flew to Russia with my friends, singer Mordechai Ben David and composer Moshe Rosenbloom, with the hopes of rekindling a fire within their hearts.

I had massive posters printed for the special events and secured halls in Moscow and Leningrad.

I flew with great hope in my heart. But, I wasn't sure what we would encounter, but when I arrived at the event I knew our mission would be a success. The room was packed. Some 6,000 Jews in total attended the events.

The energy was electric. Jews who have never experienced their religion danced with fervor, as we sang about the Jewish People's eternal existence – *Am Yisrael Chai*.

One of the high points was when I addressed the crowd and told them they were members of a unique nation, which has survived for thousands of years despite persecution and oppression. Many kings and despots have attempted to annihilate the Jews, but had failed.

I called on them to send their children to the newly established Jewish educational institutions. "You are a part of us, and we embrace you warmly," I concluded with tears in my eyes.

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Hundreds of people got on line at the end of the vent to register their children. These were the first Migdal Ohr students in Russia.

I beseeched G-d, and using Rabbi Levi of Berditchev form of approach, I told Him: "Look upon your children, who are seeking your Torah whenever possible."

After leaving the event I thought about the wonder of the Jewish nation. From where do they draw such strength? The Patriarchs, who have paved the path, have set the pace of events for us.

In our weekly parsha we are told of a set of dreams dreamt by Yosef. Next week we will read of another set dreamt by Pharaoh. The differing dreams underscore the uniqueness of Jewish People.

Yosef dreams first of sheaves of wheat, a material article, but he then dreams of stars and the moon, a loftier existence.

Pharaoh begins with dreaming about livestock, but then dreams of a lower form of existence – wheat. No progression can be seen in Pharaoh's dreams.

Yosef's progressing dreams are symbolic of Israel's existence – a constant succession from one state to a higher one, consistently moving forward to loftier spiritual heights, achieved through toil.

This special quality is apparent throughout the generations, a quality inherited from our Patriarchs and Matriarchs.

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I returned this week from attending another event in Moscow, a guest of my friend Rabbi Berel Lazar. The curtain has been lifted again – I could not believe the massive crowd that came to the event focused on Judaism.

The sight was moving. I stood in the same spot I did years ago and told the gathering that I was excited to see such an impressive gathering of Torah.

Who would have dreamt that several decades down the road, we would be standing again in Moscow and celebrating Judaism with such zeal? It is the path paved by our predecessors which has given us the strength currently on display.

When I descended from the stage I was approached by Yonatan, a man in his late 30s, who had the appearance of a religious Jew. "Rabbi, there is one song I have known since I was a child – 'Am Yisrael Chai'." He heard it at the event and had not forgotten it since. "I knew then that I had roots," he said. He had reconnected.