

JUST FIVE MORE MINUTES OF SLEEP!

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week, parshas Miktetz, is also Shabbos Chanuka. "And it was miktetz [at the end of] two years and Paroah dreamt.[41:1]" The Medrash asks: Don't other people also dream? (Meaning, what is the special significance of Paroah dreaming?) The Medrash answers that a dream of the king is a dream that affects the entire world.

Rav Sholom Schwadron zt"l contrasts the reactions that different people had to their dreams. Earlier in Breishis [Parshas Vayaitzay 28:11-17] we learned about Yaakov's dream. He witnessed the meeting point of heaven and earth -- the angels descending and ascending a ladder and Hashem standing over it. When he awoke, he was in awe of the holiness of that place. Not only didn't he go back to sleep, but he regretted ever having gone to sleep in such a holy place.

Shlomo HaMelech [King Solomon] had a dream which concerned the entire kingdom. Hashem appeared to him in a dream and asked what he wanted. The whole world was before him for the asking. Shlomo didn't ask for honor or wealth. He didn't ask for anything for himself. He appreciated his responsibility as the king and acted accordingly. He requested a heart that would differentiate between good and evil in order to properly judge the nation.

He awoke immediately and was filled with exuberant happiness. Until the morning he lay astounded by what he had experienced. Needless to say, he didn't entertain the thought of going back to sleep.

Now let's look at Paroah and his level of appreciation of the position and power that he held. He dreamt of seven emaciated cows devouring seven fat cows and then he awoke. He recognized that this dream had ramifications for his entire kingdom. How did he react? "And he slept and dreamt a second time... [41:5]" He turned over and went back to sleep!

In this second dream he saw seven skinny stalks swallow seven full, healthy stalks. He again awoke and recognized that he had dreamt a dream which would seriously affect his entire empire. "And it was in the morning, his spirit troubled him. [41:8]" In the morning he acted and summoned advisors to interpret the dream. What did he do after the second dream until the morning? He again, turned over and went back to sleep! In the morning it bothered him... Until then... Sleep!

Whereas Shlomo was only concerned for the good of his people, Paroah's main concern was some 'serious shut-eye'. It would seem, Rav Sholom writes, that had Hashem asked Paroah, "What is it that you want? Any request of yours will be granted..." Paroah would have answered, "Oh G-d, please, please, LET ME GO BACK TO SLEEP!!! Please, just ten more minutes... I promise, I'll only hit the

snooze button once..."

Appreciation. Shlomo appreciated who he was and what came along with it. Paroah didn't. Appreciation. Webster's defines it as: 1) have a sensitive understanding of, and 2) enjoy with gratitude. Unless one has a sensitive understanding of his position and what he has, he will never feel the requisite gratitude.

The mitzva of Chanuka is l'hodos u'l'hallel {to thank and to praise}. Rav Moshe Schwab zt"l in Ma'arachei Lev delineates how the Rabbonon {Rabbis} enacted the different laws of Chanuka to parallel the different miracles which occurred.

Whereas the dedication of the Mishkan {Tabernacle} by Moshe and the dedication of the Temple by Shlomo were each seven days, the rededication of the Temple by the Chashmona'im is celebrated by eight days of Chanuka. Why is this? Because the rebuilding of the altar and the fixing of the Holy Vessels took eight days of work.

Why do we kindle lights? Because the Chashmona'im entered the Temple area and kindled the lights of the Menorah which had been extinguished for so many years.

Why is the full Hallel {Praise}said? For every great redemption of Israel we praise and thank Hashem for His goodness.

We see that every detail of the miracle was cause for an additional law in order to remember and appreciate it. Chaza"l {The Sages of the Oral Law}appreciated every added detail of the miracles being wrought.

We are so busy with life that we don't have the time or presence of mind to sit back and appreciate all that we have. I remember reading a list of quips which began: 'You know you're in trouble when...' My favorite one ended with: '...you keep waiting for things to get back to normal, and then, slowly, it begins to dawn on you, THIS IS NORMAL!!!' Always dreaming of the pleasures of the past and the future, we tend to let the pleasures of the present slip by until they too, inexorably, join the past.

Chanuka was the time when the special link that we share with Hashem was confirmed. The ancient Greeks tried to force us to abdicate those commandments which both portray and strengthen that special bond. "All is natural," they proclaimed. "Only natural beauty, wisdom and strength is worthy of praise."

A handful of Jews were willing to wage war against their mighty armies -- by all odds, a mission that would lead to death. They preferred death as Jews fighting for life as Jews, over a life of spiritual dearth and death, devoid of the true meaning and purpose of life. They had an appreciation of who they were and what came along with that.

This willingness to go all-out for that special bond between us and Hashem resulted in a supernatural occurrence -- the victory of the weak over the strong, the few over the many, the holy

over the defiled, the righteous over the evil and the keepers of the Torah over those who rebel. The clear revelation of the bankruptcy of the veil of nature when it stands in the way of the will of Hashem. The clear revelation of the special bond that exists between us and Hashem if we'll only avail ourselves to it.

The intensity of a relationship is determined by the interest level of the least-interested member. Being that Hashem infinitely wants a relationship with us, the strength and depth of the relationship is set by our degree of desire for such a relationship. I once heard a beautiful quote: The only thing that stands between you and G-d is you...

Chanukah is the time l'hodos u'l'hallel [to thank and to praise]. To appreciate the miracles that Hashem has done for us and those that He ceaselessly continues to do. To appreciate (be sensitive to and enjoy with gratitude) all that He has given us in life. To appreciate the special bond that Hashem avails to us and the gratifying responsibilities which accompany it.

Just as Hashem was willing to go to all-out for us and that relationship "bayamim hahaim" [in those days], He has that same willingness now, "bazman hazeh" [in the present time].

Good Shabbos and a very joyous Chanuka,

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