

# DREAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

*by Rabbi Binyomin Adler*

## Introduction

One of the more fascinating aspects of the recent parshiyos is the fact that some major events occurred through the vehicle of dreams. In Parashas Vayeitzei the Torah records the dream that Yaakov had where he saw a ladder and angels ascending and descending the ladder. According to the Medrash this dream was a portend for the exiles that the Jewish People would endure in the future. In Parashas Vayeishev we learn about the dreams that Yosef had which were a sign that in the future Yosef would provide sustenance for Egypt and for his entire family. One must wonder why dreams play such an important role in Jewish history.

## Dreams and food

It is noteworthy that the word for dream in Hebrew is *chalom*, and the word for bread in Hebrew is *lechem*. It would appear that there is a direct association between bread, i.e. sustenance, and dreams. What is the association between sustenance and dreams?

## Yaakov dreamed and requested bread to eat

When we take a closer look at the dream that Yaakov had with the ladder, we will notice that subsequent to the dream, Yaakov made the following request from HaShem. It is said (Bereishis 28:20) *vayidar Yaakov neder leimor im yihyeh Elokim imadi ushmarani baderech hazeh asher anochi holeich vinasan li lechem leechol uveged libosh*, then Yaakov took a vow, saying, "if G-d will be with me, will guard me on this way that I am going; will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear. It appears that after experiencing the phenomenal dream, Yaakov felt justified in requesting bread to eat. Why did Yaakov feel that his dream warranted a request for sustenance?

Yosef's special garment incurred favor amongst those who saw him. In the prayer that is recited on Yom Tov when the Kohanim bless the congregation, it is said *visihma tefillasi naakasi vienkasi tamid kisheim sheshamata enkas Yaakov timimecho hanikra ish tam visiten li ulichol nafshos beisi mizonoseinu ufarnasaseinu... kisheim shenasata pisas lechem leechol liYaakov avinu hanikra ish tam... vayihyu divarai nishmaim laavodasecho kisheim shenasata es Yosef tzadikecho bishaa shehilbisho aviv kesones pasim lichein ulichesh ulirachamim bieinecho uvieinei chol roav*, that You listen to my prayer, my plea and my cry at all times, just as You listened to the cry of Yaakov, Your perfect one, who is called 'a wholesome man.' And may You bestow upon me and upon all the souls of my household, our food and our sustenance... just as You gave a portion of bread to eat and

clothing to wear to our father Yaakov who is called 'a wholesome man.'...and that my words in Your service be heard; just as You granted Yosef, Your righteous one - at the time that his father garbed him in a fine woolen tunic - that he find favor, kindness and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all those who beheld him. There is an obvious question regarding this passage. How can we declare that HaShem granted Yosef favor kindness and mercy in the eyes of all who beheld him, when we know that it was specifically the fact that Yaakov bestowed Yosef with the extra garment that caused his brothers to be jealous of him?

Yaakov took a vow and taught future generations a lesson Perhaps the answer to this question is that in this prayer we equate the request of Yaakov seeking to have clothing to wear and bread to eat with the fact that Yaakov bestowed Yosef with an extra garment. Yaakov experienced an awesome dream and then requested from HaShem that he have food to eat. Yosef received a fine garment from his father and this led Yosef to have thoughts of ruling over his brothers. Thus, although the extra garment caused jealousy to Yosef's brothers, ultimately it led to Yosef providing for his entire family during the famine. In a similar vein, when Yaakov experienced his phenomenal dream, he felt that the dream warranted his request that HaShem provide him food. Aside from his personal request for sustenance, Yaakov was teaching future generations that when one feels that the time is propitious, one should ask HaShem for his needs. This idea is reflected in the fact that it is said *vayidar Yaakov neder leimor*, then Yaakov took a vow, saying. The Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 70-:1) comments on the word *leimor* that this teaches us that future generations should take a vow in a time of their distress. It would follow that the vow can include a condition such as Yaakov made with HaShem, that if HaShem provides for me, then I will offer sacrifices and tithes to HaShem.

Yosef interprets the dreams and uses them for his family's benefit In this week's parasha, Pharaoh experiences two dreams and Yosef interprets both of them to be alluding to the upcoming times of great plenty and great famine that will occur in Egypt. Yet, Yosef went even further than merely interpreting the dreams. Yosef took the opportunity to suggest to Pharaoh how the country would be able to survive the famine, and this was by appointing a wise and discerning man who would take measures to ensure that the surplus grain from the years of plenty would tide them over for the years of famine. Yosef did not suffice with just interpreting Pharaoh's dreams. Rather, Yosef saw the dreams as an opportunity for him to ascend to power and witness the fulfillment of his own dreams, which according to the Ramban were a form of prophecy.

### **The Shabbos connection**

Every week HaShem bestows upon the Jewish People a wondrous gift called Shabbos. Similarly, we are now celebrating the festival of Chanukah, when the lights that our forefathers kindled in the Bais HaMikdash burn once again in the hearts of every Jew. What better time is there than on the Holy Shabbos and on the holy festivals than to request from HaShem that He provide us with all our needs? Shabbos and the festivals are truly like a dream, where if one contemplates the holiness of these days, one would certainly feel that he is in a dream-like state of mind. HaShem should allow

us to be aware of the holiness and purity that can be experienced in these times and may we once again witness miracles like those that HaShem performed for our forefathers.

### **Shabbos in the Zemiro:**

#### **Menuchah Visimchah**

**Composed by an unknown author named Moshe**

#### **Hashem's Day of Delight**

Shabbos kodesh yom chemdaso ki vo shavas Kel mikol milachto, the Holy Shabbos, day of His delight - for on it the Almighty rested from all His work. It is common for people to work hard and then anticipate resting from their exertion. On Shabbos, so to speak, HaShem anticipated His day of rest from the toil of creating the world in six days. While before HaShem there is certainly no such concept of toil, we can only understand Shabbos in these terms. It is thus of utmost importance to be aware that Shabbos is HaShem's day of delight, and we must delight in every aspect of Shabbos. This includes, eating, drinking, sleeping, parodying and studying HaShem's precious Torah.

### **Shabbos in Tefillah:**

#### **Coming closer to each other like the angels**

Kulam ahuvim kulam berurim kulam giborim kulam kedoshim; they are all flawless; they are all mighty; they are all holy. The expression regarding the angels that they are flawless requires reflection. The Eitz Yosef writes that this means that the heavenly beings are devoid of an Evil Inclination, and they are clear hearted and intellects that are removed. While these definitions are difficult to relate to regarding human beings, it is worth noting that the angels are all in harmony because they do not have an Evil Inclination that sows discord and jealousy. We should take this message to heart and we should realize that when we overcome our temptations to be jealous of another's possessions or talents, we come closer to that person. Thus, we can also be clear hearted and one step closer to HaShem, similar to the angels on high.

### **Shabbos Story:**

#### **Teaching to you and to future students**

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky writes: Rabbi Shlomo Hyman, the first dean of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, had a most amazing way of teaching his students. Unlike the dry lectures given by many brilliant scholars, he would shout with almost breathless rapture as he explained the Talmud and its commentaries. His eyes would sparkle and his arms would wave as he orchestrated Talmudic theory. After the class he would almost collapse from the exhaustion.

One particular snowy day back in the early 1940's only four boys came to class. Nevertheless, Rabbi Hyman delivered his dissertation as if the room was packed with hundreds of students. Beads of sweat rolled down his face as he argued points of law to the disbelieving four boys. As he paused to catch his breath, one of the boys mustered his courage and beseeched the Torah Giant. "Rebbe,

please -- there are only four of us." Rabbi Hyman's eyes widened. "You think I'm giving this class for four boys? I am giving this class to hundreds of boys. I'm giving this class to you, your students, their students, and their students!"

### **The precious Menorah**

Everyone knew of the tzaddik from Sassov, Rabbi Moshe Leib. Thousands of people constantly streamed to him to ask for blessings and advice on personal and business matters, and he never refused them his precious time.

Once, when Rabbi Moshe Leib was visiting the town of Brod, a wealthy woman came to him to ask him to pray for the recovery of her daughter who was seriously ill. When the woman introduced herself and mentioned her father's name, Rabbi Moshe Leib realized that he knew of her family, who were famous for their generosity to the needy. As the conversation progressed the wealthy woman described her child's illness, and the tzaddik promised to pray for her. As it was customary to give the tzaddik a monetary donation to distribute among the poor or for a specific urgent cause, the woman removed an envelope from her purse and placed it on the table, but Rabbi Moshe Leib refused to accept it. "I don't want money from you!" he said.

"But Rabbi, what do you mean? What is it that you want from me? I will do anything in the world to help my daughter!"

"I know that you have a very beautiful and precious Chanukah menorah. That is what I want!" Rabbi Moshe Leib said quietly.

"Rabbi, I do have the menorah you describe, but it is a family heirloom and my most precious possession. However, if you want it, I will gladly give it to you!"

The Rebbe listened carefully, nodding his head. "I am aware that the menorah is very special and precious to your family. If you agree to let me have it, you must mean this most sincerely; you must give it to me with no compunctions or inner doubts whatsoever."

"I understand completely, and I agree wholeheartedly. The menorah is yours; I will bring it to you today," the woman said in a strong, firm voice.

That evening, when she came and presented the menorah to Rabbi Moshe Leib, his students were buzzing with amazement. How had the Rebbe known about the menorah's existence? Why had the Rebbe asked for a gift, something so far out of character? And why in the world did he want it anyway, when it was a known fact that he used only the menorah he had received from his teacher and Rebbe, Reb Shmelke of Nicholsburg?

On the first night of Chanukah, as the Rebbe prepared to light the first wick, Reb Yechiel Tzoref the silversmith stood at his side. He had no idea why he had been chosen for this great honor, but he was beaming with happiness. After the light was kindled, the Rebbe beckoned to Reb Yechiel to

enter his study. "I want to tell you a story about your grandfather, may he rest in peace, for whom you were named.

When the time came for your grandfather to arrange a match for his daughter, he was so poor, he couldn't find a suitor. No one would lend him money, since it was obvious he could never return the loan. After exhausting all of his acquaintances he decided to approach a certain very wealthy man. When he asked him to lend him money to arrange a marriage for his daughter, the wealthy man replied, 'I know you will never be able to repay me, but I will make a deal with you. I know that you own a very beautiful menorah, the likes of which I have never seen. If you will give it to me, I will give you 10,000 gulden, enough for the marriage and even more!'

When Reb Yechiel heard the demand, he was shocked. It was his most precious possession. He, himself, had made it from silver coins that his Rebbe, Reb Zushe of Anipoli, had distributed to his Chasidim each year as Chanukah âgelt.' Reb Yechiel had collected the prized coins year by year. When he had amassed quite a collection, Reb Yechiel melted them down and formed from them a magnificent menorah. It was this menorah which the rich man wanted. No, thought Reb Yechiel, he couldn't even think of relinquishing it.

Having refused the rich man's offer, Reb Yechiel went everywhere to try to borrow the money, but in the end he failed. He had no choice but to accept the rich man's terms and part with his beloved menorah. When the wealthy man passed away and stood before the Heavenly Court there was great confusion as to how to rule in his case. On the one hand, the rich man had certainly performed the mitzvah of giving money to help poor brides. But on the other hand, he had coveted the prized possession of a poor man and caused him great pain.

Finally, the Court reached a decision. The wealthy man's reward would be withheld, since the mitzvah was intertwined with the sin of coveting the possession of another. "That is why I have arranged to return the menorah to you, his grandson. The sin has now been atoned for, and the wealthy benefactor of your grandfather will rest in peace, enjoying his eternal reward."

### **Shabbos in Navi:**

### **Shmuel I Chapter 22**

### **Shabbos is also a day of reckoning**

In this chapter we learn of the tragic incident where Shaul discovers from Doeg that Achimelech the Kohen in the city of Nov provided Dovid with food and a sword. Shaul instructed Doeg to kill the Kohanim of Nov and Doeg proceeded to annihilate the entire city of Nov. One must wonder what the inhabitants of Nov did wrong to incur such a harsh punishment. The Radak (verse 18) and the Ralbag (Shmuel II 1:27) suggest that they were liable the death penalty for their sins but Scripture does not mention what their sin was, aside from the fact they were descendants of the house of Eli, who HaShem forewarned that his descendants would die as young men. While this punishment may be deemed harsh for people who were pious, we learn from here that HaShem's word is what endures.

Similarly, we must realize that HaShem gave us the Holy Shabbos and in addition to being a day of delight, it is also a day in which we must be stringent in its observance, as it is one of HaShem's commandments.

### **Shabbos in Agadah:**

#### **The uniqueness of Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and Bris Milah**

It is known that the Greeks sought to eradicate the observance of Rosh Chodesh, Shabbos and Bris Milah. The Sfas Emes (Chanukah 5647) writes that these three mitzvos have a uniqueness in olam, the world, in shanah, the year, and in nefesh, the soul. This idea is reflected in the fact that milah is a sign in the soul, Shabbos is a sign in the creation, as all the shefa, influence, that comes to the Jewish People is above the influence of the weekday. Rosh Chodesh is in time, as the Jewish People count according to the lunar calendar, and our times are unique, unlike the calendar of the gentiles.

### **Shabbos in Halacha:**

#### **Summary**

One can transfer food from one pot on the blech to another pot. Thus, one can take boiled water from a kettle on the blech and pour it into a pot of cholent. Nonetheless, the pot should be moved off the flame, or the pouring should be done in a slow manner.

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