



A Taste of Torah

Stuff of Dreams

By: Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

One of the most powerful moments of the holiday prayer service is the recitation of *Birchas Kohanim* (the Priestly blessing). All the Kohanim in the shul stand in front of the *aron* (ark), facing the congregation, and give over the blessing of Hashem, a blessing of prosperity, favor and peace. According to our custom, there are two prayers that the congregation says during *Birchas Kohanim*. The first has its source in the Talmud (Brachos 55b), “One who had a dream but doesn’t know what it was should stand as the Kohanim bless the people, and he should pray, ‘Hashem, I am yours and my dreams are yours! I have had a dream, but I don’t know what it is. If it was positive, please strengthen it, and if it was negative, please rectify it.’” It is interesting that of all things we can ask for at this special time, our Sages chose to institute a prayer about dreams. What is it that’s so important about dreams?

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953) explains, based on a passage in the Zohar, that dreams reveal our innermost, subconscious thoughts. What a person dreams about at night is a reflection of what one really is about, and what one’s deepest desires and aspirations are. Perhaps we can suggest that the prayer to Hashem to rectify our dreams is, in fact, a request for Divine assistance in bringing our innermost desires in line with the will of Hashem.

But the question still remains: What does this have to do with *Birchas Kohanim*? To answer this question, let us turn to a second passage in the Talmud (Brachos 20b):

The angels ask Hashem, “If You don’t accept bribes and don’t show favoritism, how is it that one of the blessings in *Birchas Kohanim* is, ‘May Hashem show you favor?’” Hashem replies “Should I not show favor to the Jewish People? I commanded them to say *Birchas Hamazon* (Grace after Meals; recited following a meal of bread) only when fully satiated, and they took it upon themselves to say the blessing even after consuming an olive-sized piece of bread.”

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato (1707-1746), in his classic work *Mesilas Yesharim*, explains that one way for a person to receive kindness from Hashem that is undeserved is to go beyond the letter of the law in one’s performance of the mitzvos. (Of course, one cannot decide how to perform this on his own; Rabbinical guidance is required in doing this properly.) By doing more than strictly required, one merits to be spared the strict judgement of measure for measure, as Hashem will act in kind and give the person a second chance.

It thus emerges that at the time of *Birchas Kohanim*, when we receive the blessing of Divine favor, we are able to ask for things that we don’t completely merit. It’s therefore appropriate to ask that Hashem bring our innermost desires in line with His will – something we don’t really deserve. The focus of the prayer thus is not for the dreams themselves, but rather for the sources of our dreams - our aspirations, - our aspirations, our desires, as we ask that they be elevated to Hashem’s will.

Stories For The Soul

Worth Crying About

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan; 1839-1933) lived in Radin, a small Polish town. Being a village with a small, observant Jewish population, the Chofetz Chaim never witnessed Shabbos desecration. During World War I, though, he, along with the other residents, was forced to flee to a larger city.

The first Shabbos he was there, he witnessed the Shabbos being desecrated. He sat and cried for a long time. The next Shabbos, he again saw a Jew desecrate the Shabbos, and he cried again, this time for a longer period. His students asked him why he had cried on the second Shabbos so much longer than on the first Shabbos; what had affected him more the second time around?

The Chofetz Chaim explained that when he saw the Shabbos being desecrated the second time, he realized that it did not bother him as much as it had the first time. He was very distraught that he had lost his sensitivity, and this caused him to cry for an even longer time.

In this week’s parsha, the section discussing a Nazirite, who abstains from, among other things, consumption of wine, follows the section dealing with a *sotah*, a woman suspected of adultery who is tested by the bitter waters. This is to teach us that one who sees a *sotah* in her disgrace will be inspired to renounce consumption of wine, due to its capacity to bring one to inappropriate behavior. Although one would think that on the contrary, one who saw the disastrous results of immoral behavior would stay far away without additional assistance, the Torah teaches us that even if one is repulsed by an event, it nonetheless diminishes one’s sensitivity toward avoiding it, thus necessitating drastic

Kollel Happenings

THE LAWS OF INTEREST AT THE JUNE 3RD T4T

Join Daniel Askenazi, Vice President, Municipal Capital Markets Group Inc. and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean of the Denver Community Kollel, for an interesting discussion on the Torah's approach to lending and borrowing. June 3rd, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 11:30 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

In Judaism, numbers are not simply a way to count things. Every number has a special significance. From gematria to Who Knows One? recited at the end of the Passover Seder, discover the world of numbers with Rabbi Moshe Heyman of the Denver Community Kollel. Every other Thursday from 2-3 pm Marathon Investments, 6565 South Dayton St., #1200. For more info, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: The Hebrew word for "us" is "anachnu"; in Aramaic, it is "anu." In the siddur, Aramaic occurs occasionally, though Hebrew is generally used. Can you think of a prayer where both the words *anachnu* and *anu* are used?

A: 1) In the morning prayers, the section that begins *le'olam yehei adam* contains both words (according to most versions). 2) According to some versions (including the original source in the Talmud, Sotah 40a) of *modim d'rabbanan* (recited by the congregation during the chazzan's repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei*), the prayer ends "*al she'anuu modim,*"

while it begins "*Modim anachnu.*" The discrepancy seems to be due to the fact that the prayer begins with a paraphrase of a verse in Chronicles, while the remainder of the prayer is in the Aramaic of the Babylonian Sages who formulated it. 3) In Vidui, we say "*she'ain anu*" and "*aval anachnu.*"

This week's question: When do we repeat an entire chapter of Psalms twice in one set of prayers (including *shacharis-mussaf*)?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org

Ask the Rabbi

All's Well That Ends Well

Binyomin S. Altman wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Hi there, I was told by more than 1 person about some kind of a minhag [custom] people have regarding eating the ends of bread. The basic reasoning being that eating the end causes forgetfulness. Later, I found no source for this and when I asked my uncle about this he showed me a footnote in a sefer that quoted a renowned Rabbi as saying that he has always done it (avoided eating the ends), but that there is no clear source for it. So, should one avoid eating ends of bread?

Dear Binyomin,

The Talmud lists ten things which are detrimental to one's understanding of the Torah. One of them is eating bread not completely baked. This can be understood as follows:

Someone who rushes to eat the bread before it is fully baked will approach Torah study with the same lack of patience. He'll rush through each subject without taking time to clarify all the details and reasons. The result will be an unsatisfying, 'half-baked' grasp of the matter.

The custom to avoid bread-ends apparently

started in the days when many people were too poor to afford their own oven, and townspeople would bring their dough to a large communal oven to bake. In order to conserve space, they placed the doughs end to end, and often the bread stuck together. As a result the end part was not well-baked and therefore not eaten.

Commercial bakeries today often bake in the same way, and if you notice, you can see where the loaves were pulled apart. Some bakeries put doughs side by side and they stick together on the sides. It would follow, then, that the side should not be eaten. The reality is that both the ends and the sides are almost always completely baked, and there's no need to protest if someone eats them. As a boy, I remember my father referring to the end piece as the "krychik" - it was the prized morsel in our family because it was the crispiest piece!

Sources:

-Talmud Tractate Horiyot 13b

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