



Mikeitz/ Shabbos Chanukah 5777

December 30, 2016

# A Taste of Torah

## Stuff of Dreams

by Rabbi Yaakov Zions

One of the highlights of our holiday prayers is *Birchas Kohanim* (the Priestly Blessing). The descendants of Aharon Hakohen, armed with the spiritual power to convey blessing upon the congregation, raise their hands in a unique way and pronounce the sacred words of this blessing. During specific breaks, the congregation recites special supplications on behalf of dreams they have, or may have, dreamt. Why are dreams so highly regarded that prayers asking for their beneficence are recited at such an awesome time?

In our parsha (as well as the previous parsha, Vayeshev) we read about dreams and interpretations that leave major imprints on the world and Jewish history. What is the significance of dreams? Aren't they just a figment of the imagination, occurring naturally while sleeping?

The Talmud (Brachos 55a-57b) contains a large discussion devoted to dreams and their significance. In that discussion and in other statements of our Sages, there seems to be a contradiction as to the importance, if any, to be ascribed to dreams. Let us examine some of them. On the one hand, we are told in the Torah (Bamidbar 12:6) that a prophet would usually receive his or her prophecy through a dream. The Talmud (ibid.) describes many dreams and their connotations. On the other hand, we find statements such as, "One is only shown (in a dream) what he was previously thinking." (Brachos 55b)

How do we reconcile these conflicting statements?

One approach is offered by the Abarbanel (Rabbi Yitzchok Abarbanel, 1437-1508). He suggests that there are, indeed, two classes of dreams. The standard dreams are, indeed, figments of imagination, using the props of previous thoughts and events. These dreams come as a jumble of ideas, with strange, even illogical, details. On the other hand, dreams of a higher nature are keenly perceived by the dreamer as a message or direction from above. Such dreams are referred to as one-sixtieth of prophecy (Brachos 57b).

The Toras Chaim (by Rabbi Avraham Chaim Shur, 1560-1632) explains the connection between *Birchas Kohanim* and dreams based on the abovementioned statement. One who has experienced a less-than-positive dream has experienced a negative mini-prophecy. A well-known concept in halacha is *bitul b'shishim*, or nullification of a non-kosher item when it has been mixed in a 1-to-60 ratio. Similarly, this mini-prophecy can be nullified with a full-fledged prophecy. Our *Birchas Kohanim* is a prophecy of sorts and helps nullify the dream. A hint to this idea is the fact that *Birchas Kohanim* has exactly 60 words! May we merit good dreams, along with the ultimate redemption, when we will refer back to our exile as a dream (Tehillim 126:1).

## Stories For The Soul

### Not Sure Where I'm Going

Rabbi Zusha of Hannipoli (1718-1800) was known for his absolute reliance on G-d for all matters large and small.

One day, he was walking to the synagogue to study and pray. On the way, he was stopped by a policeman. "Jew," he barked, "tell me where you are going!"

"I don't know," replied Reb Zusha.

"What do you mean, you don't know!" roared the policeman. "You must be headed to do some illegal activity, and you don't want to tell me. Tell me now or I'll throw you into jail!"

This exchange went back and forth several times until the enraged officer dragged Reb Zusha off to police headquarters.

Several hours went by, and no one had seen Reb Zusha. His family began to worry - he had not arrived at the synagogue. After some searching, they found him at police headquarters.

"What are you doing here?" they cried. "You were on your way to the synagogue!"

The policeman, overhearing this, ran over to Reb Zusha and, in exasperation, exclaimed, "You were on your way to the synagogue?! Why couldn't you just say so!?"

Reb Zusha smiled serenely and explained, "When I left the house, I was headed for the synagogue. But you asked me where I was going. To that question, I answered that I didn't know. And you see that it is true,

## Kollel Happenings

### WINTER GARDENS WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT JAN. 11<sup>TH</sup>

The Kollel Women's Division is excited to announce that its 5<sup>th</sup> annual Women's Wellness Workshop will be held on Jan. 11, 2017. *Winter Gardens Women's Night Out* will feature noted psychotherapist and speaker Lauren Roth, three intriguing TEDx-style talks, and great food and camaraderie. Don't miss the most unique event of the year! For more info or to reserve, visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org), email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

### LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING THIS JANUARY 1<sup>ST</sup>

Start your day off on the right foot with Torah study! Join the Kollel for learning at two locations: At the Kollel West Side Bais Medrash, breakfast at 9:15 followed by learning., and at the Kollel Southeast Torah Center, shacharis at 8 followed by breakfast and learning at 9.

### A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights, 7:40-8:30 pm, at the Kollel for men, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women.

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** There is a *minhag* (custom) of some to give Chanukah *gelt* (money) to children on the 5<sup>th</sup> night of Chanukah. What is unique about that night to warrant this *minhag*?

**A:** According to our current Jewish calendar setup, Chanukah can begin on every day of the week except Tuesday (Monday evening). Therefore, the 5<sup>th</sup> night is the only one that cannot coincide

with Shabbos, when giving money would be forbidden! (Source: Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky shlita, quoting his father Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky zt"l, the Steipler)

**This week's question:** What are two unique aspects about the fast of *Asara B'Teves*, aside from being the shortest public fast of the year?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Yosef Caro – the Bais Yosef Part VI

Shlomo Molcho had now miraculously escaped the clutches of the Church; meanwhile, his remaining two predictions had come true! He and Dovid Hareuveni now travelled to Charles V, emperor of Germany, hoping he would join them in their war. They came bearing a flag with the Maccabi name on it. Upon their arrival, however, they were promptly captured by Charles and returned to the Inquisition. Dovid was imprisoned, and it is not known what happened to him thereafter. Shlomo was tried a second time and condemned to be burned. Gagged for the entirety of the trial, lest he speak against Christianity, the gag was removed as he was tied to the stake, when he was asked if he'd accept Christianity and thus be spared.

Shlomo replied that he regretted that he spent his youth as a Christian, and that he was prepared to return his soul to G-d as a Jew. He was then burned, and became a legendary martyr in the history of the Jewish People.

While the standing of Dovid Hareuveni is unclear, Shlomo Molcho was regarded by many as a holy martyr, and he is even mentioned as a source in halachic works.

Rabbi Karo expressed his wish that he merit to die in sanctification of G-d's Name as Shlomo

Molcho had. Whether Rabbi Karo actually met Shlomo or not, it is clear he knew of him and was inspired by him. It is very possible that Rabbi Karo's inclination toward Kabbalah came through Shlomo Molcho's influence, as was his decision to move to the Land of Israel, where Safed was a major center of Kabbalah.

While in Salonica, Rabbi Karo met Rabbi Yosef Taitazak (1465-1546), an exile from Spain. Rabbi Taitazak became Rabbi Karo's rebbe in halachic and Kabbalistic matters. He also met Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz (1505-1584), a student of Rabbi Taitazak and a great Kabbalist, perhaps most famous for writing the Shabbos song *Lecha Dodi*. Rabbi Alkabetz also became a rebbe to Rabbi Karo in areas of Kabbalah. Rabbi Alkabetz left Salonica and arrived in Safed in 1535.

Rabbi Karo arrived in Safed in 1536, where he joined the thriving Jewish community, which included some of the most prominent Torah scholars and Kabbalists of the time. At that time, Rabbi Yaakov bei Rav, known as the Mahari bei Rav, was the leader of the Safed Jewish community. Rabbi Karo accepted the Mahari bei Rav as his rebbe, and the two became extremely close, working together on many matters.

## Stories For The Soul

Continued from front side

for even though I left with the desire to go to the synagogue, G-d had other plans for me, and I arrived here instead!"

Yosef recognized that everything that occurred to him, the talents and abilities he possessed, all came from

G-d, and he knew that all was in G-d's hands. Despite the praise lavished upon him by Pharaoh for his explanation of Pharaoh's dreams, he credited everything to G-d.