

“Don’t be silly,” retorted the man, pulling away from his wife’s grip. “Places like this are for fools who want to throw away their money. No one can predict the future!”

It is true that the age of prophecy has long since passed, and people can no longer predict the future with any certainty. However, we human beings have the unique ability to determine, with a reasonable degree of accuracy, the consequences of our actions.

In *Abot* (2:9), it is mentioned that the great Sage, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai, asked his students to determine what is the best type of attitude or the best character trait, that one can have. The answer of Rabbi Shimon is interesting: *One who considers the future!*

Sometimes our first reaction is the best choice, and sometimes it is the worst. Sometimes a short-term gain is worth the long-term cost, and at other times it is not. Delaying instant gratification may yield great happiness in the future, while suffering short-term pain may yield pleasure and comfort later on. The crucial step is to weigh the possibilities before acting in order to “play the odds” for the best result.

We may not be able to use prophecy to foretell the future, but we can certainly use our intelligence to anticipate the results of our deeds. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

Learning Aids

My *chavrutah* and I were working through the *sugya* that relates to the signs that indicate that an animal is kosher. He was reminded of the well-known story about Harav Chaim Kanievsky and Harav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. Once, when Rav Kanievsky was studying the signs that show a grasshopper is kosher, he came across the description of a type he could not visualize. Just then, a grasshopper of exactly that type flew in through the window and landed on his *Gemara*. The insect remained on the *sefer* until the Rav had finished inspecting it, and then flew away.

On hearing this story, Rav Elyashiv commented that the *Bet Yosef* relates a similar story about one of the early commentators. Rav Elyashiv said that the story is meant to teach us that when we learn with diligence, Hashem values the learning and sends *siyatta diShmaya* to help us.

A week or so after this, we came across the *Gemara* that discusses a kosher animal called a *keresh*, which has just one horn. In trying to discover exactly what this animal looks like, we found a reference to it in a contemporary *sefer* entitled *Sichat Chulin*, a commentary by Harav Amitai ben David. We found there a picture of a giraffe, and the commentator explains why he thinks it is this animal. He also explains that a giraffe has two horns with an additional horn in the center, a description that fits in with some early commentaries on the subject.

Imagine my astonishment the next day when I saw an article about the giraffe in the weekend edition of a religious newspaper. It described a recent forensic examination performed by *rabbanim*, *shochtim* and scientists of a giraffe in the Tel Aviv Safari park. The institute that works on preserving *mesorah* for uncommon animals was interested in examining the signs on a giraffe: split hooves, upper teeth suitable for chewing the cud, and so forth. Rav Amitai ben David himself did the *shechitah* (even though the animal was not alive) and the internal examination.

The article followed exactly our discussion of the previous day, backing up and clarifying much of the mystery this *Gemara* had presented.

This was a clear sign to us that anyone who wants to learn will be helped! (When the Time is Right)

The Lorraine Gammal A"H Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לֵאחָ בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

Congregation Magen Abraham

479 Monmouth Road - P.O. Box 444

West Long Branch, New Jersey 07764

(732) 870-2225



SHABBAT VAYESHEB



שַׁבָּת וַיֵּשֶׁב

Haftarah: Amos 2:6-3:8

DECEMBER 20-21, 2019 23 KISLEV 5780

Friday Minhah: **4:15 pm**

Candlelighting: **4:15 pm**

Evening Shema after: **5:13 pm**

These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

Shaharit: **6:16, 6:40, 8:10, 9:10 am**

Morning Shema by: **9:03 am**

Shabbat Minhah: **3:55 pm**

Shabbat Ends: **5:13 pm (R"Y 5:45 pm)**

Shabbat Class after Haddalah

Sunday Minhah: **4:15 pm**

A Message from our Rabbi

(Al Hanisim) "בְּנִשְׁעָמָדָה מַלְכוּת יוֹן הָרָשָׁעָה עַל עַמּוֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל"

“When the wicked Greek kingdom rose up against Your people Israel.”

As the Jewish people prepare to celebrate Hanukah, let us focus on one specific aspect of the miracle – our victory over the *Yevanim* and its relevance today. The *Yevanim* sought to destroy Israel by attacking our spirituality, by abolishing our performance of certain *misvot*, and severing our connection to Hashem.

The very essence of *Yavan*, the Greek culture, stresses the magnitude of the physical and total denigration of the spiritual. Rabbi Zev Leff says that it is fascinating to note that the letters of the name *Yavan* – *Yud*, *Vav*, and final *Nun* – are the only three letters in the *alef-bet* that have absolutely no inner airspace, no internal. The Greeks sought to totally eradicate the pristine inner spirit of the Jew.

Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro relates that the term *kofer* is usually used to describe a person who denies the truth of Hashem, but the true source of the word *kofer* is related to the word *kofer* – pitch (tar) that was used on the *tebah* of Noah. It was “covered with pitch.” The Jew who doesn’t live like a Jew is because his inner spark is covered, covered over with the dirt and grime of his sins.

Rabbi Shapiro tells an amazing story to illustrate this. A student in Israel had a difficult question in the *Gemara* he was learning. His teacher told him to look in the Yeshiva library for a book that might deal with his question. Sure enough, he found a *sefer* that answered his question, but he didn’t agree with the author’s approach. His Rebbe recommended that he contact the author and discuss it with him. The book had the address so he went there. An elderly woman opened the door and said that’s her son but he moved out, and she gave him the new address. He went to the new address.

The person who opened the door had long hair, tie-dyed clothing, and many tattoos. In total shock, the student asked, “Are you Yosef? The author of this *sefer*?” When the man responded that he was, the yeshiva student was frozen in place.

When Yosef asked the student why he had come, the student explained he had a question on the *Gemara* and he found an answer in Yosef’s *sefer*, and disagreed with the approach.

Hesitantly, and then with growing surety, Yosef began to defend his explanation. With mounting momentum, he was transformed into a lion fighting in learning.

At that point, Yosef asked the student if he could have the *sefer*, as he didn’t have a copy. Yosef began to cry and confided to the student the trajectory of events that brought him to his present state.

The next day the student celled the elderly woman. The woman said, “Stop! Yosef is my son. I don’t know what occurred yesterday between the two of you. All I know is that I have not seen or spoken to my son in over ten years, but he just called and said, ‘Ma, I’m coming home!’”

Yes, extraordinary things happen when we uncover the magnificent inner spirit deep within every Jew. Let us continue to defeat the intent of *Yavan* until the inner spirit in every Jew bursts into a brilliant and eternal flame.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

The Truth of Torah

“And Yosef dreamed a dream and told his brothers, and they continued to hate him.” Something about Yosef’s dream stoked the fire of hatred within his brothers. What did it tell them?

The brothers understood that what we think about during the day we dream about at night. Since Yosef was exhibiting signs of self-absorption during the day, by being overly involved in fixing up his appearance, then by night he was dreaming self-centered dreams, placing himself in the position of leadership and authority over his older siblings. If he then goes on to believe that these dreams are necessary to be related as prophetic revelations, then he is a dangerous person that is blinded by ambition and guided by delusions of grandeur.

Their premise was right. The *Talmud* tells us that dreams are 1/60 prophecy. If a drop of milk fell into a pot of meat with sixty times the measurement of that drop, then the milk is considered undetectable and nullified. 1/60 is on the very cusp of being negligible. It is a proportion of 59 parts to 1. The reason most dreams are made up of 59 parts of foolishness out of 60 is because most of our 60,000 waking thoughts are admixtures of futile worries, false judgments, and mindless distractions. Therefore most of our dreams are a giant salad of fears and fantasies mixed with a touch of prophecy. The *Orchot Tzadikim* says that if a person is focused on truth all day long then their dreams at night are potentially rich with prophetic treasures.

Their assumption about Yosef may have been completely misguided. His youthful habit of grooming himself may well have been motivated by a desire to represent Torah in the most dignified way. The *halachah* states that a *Talmud* scholar is not allowed to have a stain on his garment, because he represents Torah. His father gave him a fine coat, just as we put a beautiful cover on a Torah scroll. In any case their perception of his actions may have been mistaken.

It once happened that I dreamt on *Shabuot* morning after giving *shiurim* all night that a friend of mine from out of town was holding a brand new baby boy. In the dream, he told me what the baby’s name was.

After *Shabuot*, I called him up and he told me right away that his wife had a baby

boy. I told him about my dream and that he told me the name in the dream. He asked me not to tell him the name, so I stopped there.

The next week I drove to the *berit milah*. My son came along with me and he was the only person I shared the name from the dream with. They honored me with the reading of the name and when my friend whispered the name in my ear, “Yosef”, my hand started to tremble. That was the name in the dream.

Later my friend told me that he had a different name in mind all week but they checked with a *Mekubal* and he objected to the name they had in mind, and in the last day they came up with Yosef.

I have a theory. Maybe I merited a truthful dream in the morning because I was busy at night **teaching** the truth of Torah. (Rabbi Label Lam)

Good Plan

Yaakov sends Yosef to check on the welfare of his brothers in Shechem. Why was it important to mention specifically that the brothers were in Shechem? Rav Mordechai Gifter suggests that Ya’akov *Abinu* was very aware of the ill feeling between Yosef and his brothers. Ya’akov wanted his children to get along with each other. That is the wish of every single parent.

However, they were not getting along. Ya’akov, Rav Gifter suggests, was trying to create an environment in which the brothers would make peace between themselves. He asked himself – which spot on earth is the most fitting for my sons to find unity and solidarity? Shechem.

Shechem was the place where Shimon and Levi arose and wiped out the entire city because, “Look what you did to our sister!” They risked their lives. It was not a picnic! So why did they do it? “Because that is our sister!” They loved the family, they loved their siblings, and they loved their sister! We have a concept that “the place is causative” (*hamakom gore*m). Ya’akov thought that if there is any place in the world that is conducive to family unity amongst his children, it is Shechem. Since he felt that the spiritual force of that place could promote peace in the tension-filled relationship of Yosef and his brothers, it was specifically there that he sent his favorite son to “check on the welfare” of his brothers.

The only problem was that the brothers had in fact left Shechem by the time Yosef reached there. The *Ramban* cites an expression, “*haGezeirah Emet, v’ha’charitzut sheker*” – which roughly corresponds to the expression “Man thinks and G-d laughs.” That which the *Ribono shel Olam* wants to happen **will** happen and the efforts a human being makes (to circumvent G-d’s decree) will not make a difference at the end of the day. The best laid plans come to naught if they contradict the Will of the Almighty. If the Holy One Blessed Be He wants “X” to happen, it will happen.

Ya’akov’s calculation had merit – Shechem would have been the place to promote brotherly love, but there was a Divine Plan at work to send Ya’akov and his children to Egypt. There was no way this plan could be preempted. (Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

Eye on the Future

The tourists meandered through the winding streets of the open-air bazaar, eyeing the gaudy displays, fingering the exotic trinkets, happily searching for bargain souvenirs.

At the end of a narrow street they spied a doorway that read: “Psychic – Palms Read – Your Future Revealed.”

“Come on, let’s give it a try!” begged the woman, tugging at her reluctant husband’s sleeve.