



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



CLEARING OUT THE RESTAURANT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha, Re'eh, talks about living and settling in Eretz Yisrael. This leads us to the following true story.

Yosef lived in Eretz Yisrael during a time when sadly suicide bombings were not infrequent. Everyone was on edge. Yosef once went with his wife to a fancy restaurant. They sat down and looked around. The room was full and everyone was eating their meals happily. Suddenly a young Arab man walked into the restaurant. He was wearing a bulky jacket and was carrying a heavy, bulky duffel bag. To Yosef's eyes, the man looked on edge and nervous. To Yosef, it was obvious that the Arab man was a terrorist and was about to commence a suicide attack. Yosef stood up on his seat and shouted, "Terrorist! Look out, a terrorist is here!"



LIVING TO THE FULLEST

In this week's Parsha much attention is paid to the concern of avoda zara, idol worship. One instance deals with a fully qualified prophet whose credentials are outstanding. He is a reputable and reliable prophet who has been steadfast in his commitment to his people and to HaShem. Regarding his prophecies that involve transgressing a mitzvah in the Torah on an occasional basis, we are required to follow his instructions. Even if he tells the entire nation to drive to a certain location on Yom Kippur where there will be a grand dinner, all members of our nation must follow his prophecy.

If, however, he comes with a prophecy that only one person should perform a single service to an idol the prophet must be executed. Not only must we not heed his words but he receives capital punishment.

Another situation discussed in our Parsha deals with a person who tries seducing his close friend to serve avoda zara. The Torah instructs us to kill the seducer for trying to convince his friend to do this. This unique situation does not apply to any other form of sin. If, for example, a person tries convincing his close friend to murder there is no punishment at all for the seducer. It applies only to idol worship.

How are we to understand the Torah's perspective of the reprehensibility of idol worship? It is understandable how the Torah expects us to give our life before transgressing murder and adultery. To live life at the expense of committing such immoral acts is not worth living. However, what is so heinous about idol worship? Idolatry seems to be nothing more than a foolish notion. To ascribe power to a wooden elephant is absurd but why must we die before accepting it as a power? What is so grievous about idol worship?

Suddenly panic filled the entire restaurant. People jumped out of their seats and rushed toward the door. In their haste, people knocked over entire tables, and shattered dishes and glasses. People rushed out the doors and soon enough the packed room was entirely empty. Quickly two security guards rushed the Arab man and tackled him to the ground. To the guards' shock, the man said, "Please let me go. I'm Jewish. I'm Israeli!". The man opened his wallet and showed the disbelieving guards his ID and Teudat Zehut. It was true, the young man was an innocent Israeli and his bag was filled with innocent items. It was all a terrible mistake. In fact, the man said that in the past he was mistaken for an Arab. The guards left and Yosef was left alone with the owner of the restaurant. The owner turned to him. "I appreciate your concern and conscientiousness. But you shouting out like that caused me an enormous loss of money tonight. The house was full tonight and now everyone went home without paying for their dinner. In addition, many of my chairs, tables, dishes, and stemware have been broken in the tumult. I estimate I might have lost close to \$5000 tonight. I am holding you responsible to pay for the unpaid meals and for all of the damage."

"What do you mean, I have to pay for all the meals and damage?" Yosef replied. "I was only trying to keep everyone safe."

"Yes, and I thank you for that", the owner said, "But I also expect you to pay me for the losses you caused."

Yosef sent this question to Rav Zilberstein. Was he obligated to pay the owner for all of the meals and for the damage?

What do you think?

and even more. The loyalty and fidelity that one can expect from a spouse is at least what our commitment to HaShem must be. It is true that to ascribe power to a wooden elephant is absurd, but to serve that elephant and to ascribe it with power is to say that HaShem is not the source of all energy. That is tantamount to infidelity.

It is no wonder that the one who tries seducing his friend receives capital punishment. It is not the mere sin of transgressing HaShem's wish, it is an attempt to drive a wedge between his friend and HaShem.

As we prepare for the new month of Elul, the month of closeness to HaShem, it is no wonder that so many Parshios address the severity of idol worship. While we may not consider avoda zara something relevant today, nevertheless, the point of strengthening our fidelity with HaShem is most relevant. The mitzvos we do ought to reflect how our life is not worth living if we are not fulfilling His wish.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind

MITZVA MEME



The single description that best defines our people and our Torah is RELATIONSHIP. We are defined by our unique relationship with HaShem, which no other people have. It is an exclusive relationship that we have with Him and that He has with us.

The reason we observe the Torah is because that is HaShem's wish. The life of a Jew is only worth living in order to build his relationship with HaShem. Every mitzvah carries within it the expression of that special relationship since we fulfill the mitzvah in order to do His wish. When we abstain from non kosher we are expressing that relationship by doing so to fulfill His wish. Our life is all about doing His wish.

The prohibition of idol worship, however, is distinct. It is not merely a transgression of not fulfilling His wish, it is a direct rejection of our relationship. Avoda zara at its core is an expression of our lack of fidelity to our commitment to Him. Our relationship with Him must be as complete as one has to their spouse



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

DREAMS

This week's Parsha discusses a "dreamer" who gives a false prophecy to the Jewish people. Let's look a bit deeper at the nature and function of dreams.

A dream is a succession of images, ideas, emotions, and sensations that usually occur involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep. The word dream may come from the Proto-Germanic word *draugmas* which means illusion, meaning something that looks real but is fake. The function of dreams is not fully understood by scientists. Dreams mainly occur during the rapid-eye movement (REM) stage of sleep, when brain activity is high and resembles that of being awake. REM sleep is recognized by continuous movements of the eyes during sleep. Dreams may occur during other stages of sleep as well, however, these dreams tend to be much less vivid or memorable.

The length of a dream can vary; they may last for a few seconds or approximately 20–30 minutes. People are more likely to remember the dream if they are awakened during the REM phase. The average person has three to five dreams per night, however, most dreams are immediately or quickly forgotten.

Babies spend almost half of their sleep dreaming, while the elderly spend less than a fifth.

During a typical lifespan, a person spends a total of about six years dreaming (which is about two hours each night). Most dreams only last 5 to 20 minutes.

The events in dreams are generally outside the control of the dreamer, with the exception of lucid dreaming, where the dreamer is self-aware. During most dreams, the person dreaming is not aware that they are dreaming, no matter how absurd or eccentric the dream is. The reason for this may be that the prefrontal cortex, the region of the brain responsible for logic and planning, exhibits limited activity during dreams. This allows the dreamer to more actively interact with the dream without thinking about what might happen, since things that would normally stand out in reality blend in with the dream scenery.

From the 1940s to 1985, Calvin S. Hall collected more than 50,000 dream reports at Western Reserve University. His results indicated that participants from varying parts of the world demonstrated similarity in their dream content.

In Hall's study, the most common emotion experienced in dreams was anxiety. Other emotions included abandonment, anger, fear, joy, and happiness. Negative emotions were much more common than positive ones. The recollection of dreams is extremely unreliable, though it is a skill that can be trained. Dreams can usually be recalled if a person is awakened while dreaming. Women tend to have more frequent dream recall than men.

Do blind people dream? People who are blind from birth do not have visual dreams. Their dream contents are related to other senses like hearing, touch, smell, and taste, whichever are present since birth.

Do only people dream? REM sleep and the ability to dream seem to be embedded in the biology of many animals as well. Dolphins, monkeys,

dogs, cats, rats, elephants, and shrews have observed signs of dreaming. There have also been signs of dreaming in birds and reptiles. The armadillo and the opossum are among the most prolific dreamers, judging from their REM patterns.

Studies have shown that people attribute more importance to dream content than to similar thought content that occurs while they are awake. In one study, Americans were more likely to report that they would choose to miss their flight if they dreamt of their plane crashing than if they thought of their plane crashing the night before flying (while awake). In addition, they would be as likely to choose to miss their flight if they dreamt of their plane crashing the night before their flight as if there was an actual plane crash on the route they intended to take.

Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto In *Derech Hashem* 3,1,6 described dreams as follows:

"When man is sleeping, his senses and sechel are resting. Only his *dimyon* remains active. The *dimyon* pictures 1) things that it thought of while it was awake, and 2) It is affected by the fluids in the brain, either the natural fluids of the brain, or as a result of the food that the person ate. These are all functions of a regular dream.

While a person is asleep, the higher levels of the *neshama* except for the *nefesh* separate and they communicate with spiritual beings in the spiritual realms. They can speak to either good or evil spiritual beings. Sometimes the things that the *neshama* learns from these spiritual beings are passed down to the *nefesh hatachtona* and the message is portrayed as an image in the *dimyon*. The image may be true or false based on which type of spiritual being you communicated with. If that spiritual being is a holy one, then the message that it tells will be true. If it is a *shaid*, then it will be a false message. Additionally, the image may either be clear or confused because it is mixed with the man's own imagination and natural dream. Sometimes future events are perceived this way. But even the dreams that are higher perception have some degree of interference with your own natural dream. Therefore all dreams will have some nonsense in it." Scientists have suggested the following possible benefits that dreaming can bring to us.

1. Dreams might be messages to the dreamer from their subconscious.
2. Dreams are like the cleaning-up operations of computers when they are offline, removing parasitic nodes and other "junk" from the mind during sleep.
3. Dreams serve as "threat simulation". Dreams serve the purpose of allowing for the rehearsal of threatening scenarios in order to better prepare an individual for real-life threats. Interestingly, one theory of *déjà vu* attributes the feeling of having previously seen or experienced something to having dreamed about a similar situation or place, and forgetting about it until one seems to be mysteriously reminded of the situation or the place while awake.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOSE OUT BECAUSE OF MY TARDINESS

Rabbi Avigdor Miller had great ahavas Yisrael. If a bachur asked if he could come over to discuss something private, or even if Rabbi Miller only suspected that the subject was of a sensitive nature, he would meet with the bachur while facing the wall, or inside his apartment with the door partially opened, without looking at him, explaining, "So that you shouldn't be embarrassed every time you see me".

Rabbi Miller's ahavas Yisrael naturally extended to extreme concern for people's money. Once it was time for one of his vaadim to begin, and uncharacteristically he had not yet arrived. An attendee called him from the shul payphone and Rabbi Miller quickly came. After the vaad, he asked who had made the call. Afraid that he had done something wrong, the bachur did not come. Rabbi Miller persisted, and finally the anxious young man confessed. Rav Miller quickly eased his mind and handed him a quarter. "You don't have to lose out because of my tardiness," he said.

A group once came to ask Rav Miller to sign a letter of protest against a newspaper that was disrespectful to a great person. He told them he had to think about it and he specified a time for them to come back. When they returned, he handed them an envelope. They left, opened it and found that he had written a note saying that he decided "after much consideration" not to sign the petition since it would possibly be misunderstood as getting involved in controversy. Nevertheless, he enclosed \$25 for traveling expenses since he had told them to come back for nothing.

From Rav Avigdor Miller, His Life and Revolution, By Yaakov Y. Hamburger, Published By Judaica Press



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the expensive engagement gift, Rav Zilberstein wrote that it would be permitted to leave the price tag on.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of
Alex Drucker

By his daughter Eve Drucker Messing, his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren

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