



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. I Had a Dream!
2. Yiddle Riddle



Behrooz Zinati < bzinati@ix.netcom.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

When one has a bad dream, does one have to do something about it?

Dear Behrooz Zinati,
It depends.

During the day, your body makes a lot of noise. Mundane occurrences and stimuli fill all your senses. Although you have an 'inner voice,' you can't always hear it.

When you sleep, your body quiets and your mind relaxes. Your soul then 'rises above' daytime entanglements. In such a state you can sometimes receive actual inklings of the future. "In a dream — in a vision of the night... G-d opens the ears of man" (Job 33:15).

But a bad dream can result just as easily from an extra piece of pizza or some leftover chicken too close to bedtime or a monster movie from ten years ago. It's difficult, therefore, to know what is an actual premonition, what is a reverie re-run, and what is chicken.

Many dreams are also influenced by what one thinks about during the day and indeed, if you are able to see a connection to your thoughts during the day, then you can certainly ignore the dream.

And even true dreams contain at least one false element. This we see from Joseph's dream of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing to him. Although this dream was a true portent of Joseph's future greatness, nonetheless it did contain one untrue element — the moon. Jacob said to Joseph, "Will I, your mother and all your brothers come and bow down to you?" As the commentators point out, Joseph's mother — represented by the moon — had already died, so it was impossible for this element of the dream to ever materialize.

If despite this you are still worried about a bad dream, one option is to fast the next day (*ta'anit chalom*). This particular option is not common today, since most people become depressed and weak when they fast, and therefore the negative effects may be greater than the good.

The most prevalent practice is to do what is known as 'making the dream better' — *'hatavat chalom.'* The Talmud states that Rabbi Pedat said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, "One who saw a dream and is depressed about it should 'make it better' in front of three people — providing they love him." That is, that one should tell a close friend that he is distraught by a bad dream and ask him

together with two other friends to state (with conviction) "You have seen a **good** dream" — three times. Some authorities record the custom of telling the dream to the local rabbi, and ask him for a positive interpretation of the dream.

Which reminds me of a story: One night, Yankel, the tailor of Pletstk, dreamed he saw a bridge. By the bridge stood a sentry. Under the bridge lay buried a treasure.

When he awoke, Yankel took some food and a pick-ax and set off. After many days, he came to a bridge, and — Lo and behold! — the very sentry he'd dreamed of stood by it. Yankel took his pick-ax and began to dig. "What in blazes!?" cried the soldier. Yankel told the soldier of his dream, whereupon the soldier broke out laughing.

"You fool," the soldier said. "What if I believed in dreams? Why, right now I'd be off a-runnin' to a little Jewish town called Pletstk; I'd break down the door of a little tailor named Yankel. I'd push over his cast-iron stove, and — if dreams be true — there I'd find a buried treasure. Why, that's exactly what I dreamed last night. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Yankel gasped. He snatched up his tools, ran home, pushed aside his cast-iron stove. There he saw it — the buried treasure.

Sources:

- Tractate Berachot 55a
- Aruch Hashulchan 220:4-8
- Code of Jewish Law, Orach Chaim 288
- Derech Hashem 3:1

Yiddle Riddle:

What is the relationship between the button on a man's trousers' back-pocket being on the **left** side, according to American standards, and one of the 613 commandments of the Torah?

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