

Kinder Torah

Parashas Vayetze

Sweet Dreams

Help me! Help me! Help! Help!"

Avi's father hears screaming coming from his son's bedroom. He burst in the door.

"What's happening Avi? Are you okay?"
"Where am I? What is happening? I was in terrible danger. I cried out for help. Then I woke up."

"Calm down, Avi. It was only a dream."
"Baruch Hashem, Abba. But it was so frightening."

"I can just imagine, Avi. I have had a few nightmares myself. However, I followed a simple piece of advice and they stopped."
"What was the advice, Abba?"

"It actually comes from the *parashas ha'shavuah*, Avi. Rav Yonason Eibushitz has a fascinating explanation of the verse, which states that Yaakov awoke from his sleep (Bereshis 28:16). He had been dreaming about a ladder with angels going up and down. The Medrash (Bereshis Rabba 68:14) interprets the dream as foretelling of the four *golious* (exiles). Ordinarily, one would say that this is a bad dream. However, there is another Medrash (69:7) which explains that it could not have been a bad dream."

"Why not, Abba?"

"Because Yaakov Avinu learned Torah before he went to sleep. The verse states that Yaakov Avinu awoke from his sleep. The word for sleep is '*mishnaso*.' The Medrash points out that Rebbe Yochanan added the letter '*mem*' and therefore read the word '*mimishnaso*' – from his learning. This learning prevented bad dreams."

"What is the source for that, Abba?"

"The Gemora (Berachos 14a as explained by the Mahrshah) relates that one who saturates himself with Yiras Hashem by learning Torah before he goes to sleep will not suffer from scary dreams."

"That is wonderful!"

"There is more. I once heard Rav Shimshon Pincus give a good piece of advice to use those hours of sleep productively. Do *teshuvah* before going to sleep. Our *neshamos* (souls) are judged during the time when we are sleeping. A few moments of *teshuvah* can turn sleep time into a period of forgiveness for our sins."

"Wow."

"He also said that if you go to sleep thinking about a *kasha* (difficult point in the Torah that you are learning), you may wake up with *teretz* (answer to the *kasha*)."

"Fantastic!"

"Therefore, Avi my dear son, take some time to learn Torah before you drift off to sleep. It will give you more than you ever dreamed of."

Kinderlach . . .

What do you think about as you lay your head on the pillow? I have a suggestion for you. Think about Hashem and His Greatness. He wrote the Torah, which is broader than the heavens and deeper than the sea. Think about the sugya (Torah subject) that you learned today, and its difficult points. This Torah learning can help prevent bad dreams. Think about what you did during the day. Did you make mistakes that can be corrected? Do teshuva on those mistakes. Follow this advice, kinderlach, and you will awake in the morning physically refreshed and spiritually cleansed. You may even have the answers to your kashas on the sugya. Pleasant dreams!

The Holy Places

What a beautiful morning," Chaim thinks to himself. "I cannot wait to get to the Beit HaKineset and thank Hashem for everything that He has given me, including this beautiful day."

Chaim reaches the door of the Beit HaKineset, walks in, takes a siddur, proceeds to his regular seat, and dons his tefillin. He prays the Pesukei D'zimra and Kriyas

Shema with great kavannah. He reaches the beginning of the Shemoneh Esray, and the congregation quiets down to begin the silent prayer. He bows at the beginning of the first bracha, and is suddenly disturbed by an annoying noise. A little boy is loudly munching away at a bag of potato chips.

They sound delicious, but definitely disturb his kavannah. The boy continues chomping away thru Shemoneh Esray until the bag is empty. He reaches up his hands and says, "Abba, I want more." Chaim wonders if anyone is able to concentrate after that. Now the repetition of the Shemoneh Esray begins. Two men start chatting about the news and weather.

"How could they do such a thing?" thinks Chaim. "They are speaking about mundane matters in a holy place."

The tefillah continues to the end. Two men discuss a business deal while removing their tefillin. Chaim finishes his prayers and walks toward the door. At the back of the room stand two men – a money-changer and his customer. They exchange money and conclude their business inside

of the Beit HaKineset. Chaim is beside himself. "What has happened to the holiness of this place?"

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(Yaakov) became frightened and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of Hashem" (Bereshis 28:17). The sefer Eved HaMelech points out that this verse teaches us to fear our holy places. Yaakov Avinu was in the place where the Beis HaMikdash was destined to be built – the holiest spot in the world. It was truly an awesome site, which struck fear into his heart. Similarly, we are commanded to imbue our hearts with fear of our holy places – Bottei Kinesiot and Bottei Midrashim. Why? The Eved HaMelech continues to explain that the true awe is not for the place, rather for The One Who dwells there (so to speak) – The Almighty. He is The One Who commanded us to revere His places where His *Shechina* (Divine Presence) rests. Respecting these places is really an aspect of Yiras Hashem.

How do we fulfill this mitzvah? When we are in holy places, our speech, thoughts, and deeds should all be permeated with *Yiras Shomayim*. We must think and speak only of holy matters. Discussing the news or any other mundane matter violates this holiness. Conducting business there is strictly forbidden. Not only does it lessen the sanctity of the place, it also lowers your own *madrayga* (spiritual level) of Yiras Shomayim.

A top expert on education once commented that a child who is too young to understand what a Beit HaKineset is should not be brought there. He will treat it like any other place and behave like a child. In addition to disturbing the people who are praying, he also lowers the sanctity of the holy place. Worse than that, he mistakenly learns from the earliest age that the Beit HaKineset is a place to relax, play, and eat peckalehs. This is definitely the wrong attitude to begin with, and will only impair his ability to develop proper respect of the place.

Kinderlach . . .

Hashem dwells in His holy places. Going there is a privilege. Abba will let you go when you are old enough to appreciate the holiness and behave with the proper respect. When you enter the Beit HaKineset, you will feel Hashem's Awesome Presence. You will act differently, as if you are in a different world. You will leave that childish behavior behind. This is a place where the Shechina dwells. How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of Hashem.

