

A New Yavneh Publication

21 Adar II 5768 // 28 March 2008

Obscure Halacha

How Frum are You?

By Jeff Mensch

Ok, so my initial one-paragraph point of interest piece has now expanded into a bit of a rant. That's fine, except that it means that I have to spend more time actually learning (oh, well).

So I was thinking, there must be some random bracha of interest that I could find. While I was looking that up, I ran into the whole realm of dream interpretation. It appears that if one has a bad dream, one is supposed to gather three friends the next morning and say some verses, during which they say that the dream was for good. But this seems odd. I mean, just because one says that the dream is for good doesn't meet that it necessarily is, right? Won't dreams that are augurs for bad things happen?

Wrong. The gemara in Brachot states that the augury of the dream goes according to the interpretation presented. So, if your friends tell you it will be good, it will be good. The gemara qualifies this statement by saying that this is only applicable when the interpretation is within the possible realm of meaning of the dream. So, if I dream that I get hit by a car, it probably does not mean that Jake's kids will give me candy (unless it is for a refua sheleima).

Furthermore, the gemara suggests that one fasts on the day after the dream, even if it is Shabbos. What! Even on Shabbos?? The Tur says that this is because fasting makes him happy, as it will atone him for whatever led to this disturbing dream. This is kind of odd, as I don't think too many people are happy fasting, but this seems to be contradicted in any case by the fact that one must fast afterwards as well to atone for fasting on Shabbos, so it seems that one is actually violating the happiness of Shabbos anyway. But this is what the Tur says.

Finally, I should point out that the Rashba says that such fasting is optional, as Shmuel, one of the early Amoraim, says that dreams speak nonsense.

Want to Write?

Have a good idea for a column? Contact Greg Burnham (gburnham@) if you are interested in writing for this publication. We'll publish most anything relating to Judaism or Judaism at Princeton.

A Taste of History

Anecdotes from Yavneh's Past

Here's one from the 2002 CJL scrapbook. Let us not forget the trials and sufferings our forebears endured so that we could inherit such a pleasant world. A story by Howard Deutsch '02:

The lazy activist: back when I was a freshman, people could be seen sleeping on the couches in the lounge on any given afternoon. At some point, it was decided that such behavior was inappropriate and sleeping in the lounge during the week was banned. Indeed, signs were posted over the couches trumpeting the new policy. Nappers, when caught, were awakened and reminded of the new rules.

Problem was, those couches are mighty comfy. People like me enjoyed sleeping there from time to time. Prospective undergraduate board members were lobbied to overturn this ban. Thanks to this effort and to the continued defiance of the most recalcitrant snoozers, the ban was lifted and we can all now nap in the lounge without violating the laws of heaven and earth.

Announcements

- This Friday night, after dinner winds down, join us in the CJL lounge for a dessert-and-tea buffet as well as schmoozing and board games. Kinda like an oneg, but less cramped and no long walk!
- Kiddush this week is sponsored by Yavneh in honor of the engagement of Avraham Yale '08. Mazal tov! If you would like to sponsor a Kiddush in future weeks, contact Mendy Fisch, mendy@.
- This Monday, 3/31, the fourth (and probably last) prospective JLIC Couple couple, Rabbi Jason and Chana Leib, will be giving a lunch-n-learn shiur (free for upperclassmen and grad students) from 12 PM to 1 PM in the CJL Private dining hall. This will be followed by an informal Q&A session from 1 PM to 2 PM. Please come out and be a part of this important decision!

A Quick Thought

By Rabbi Josh Ross

From Shemini 10:1 -

The sons of Aaron - Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan, they put fire in them and placed incense upon it; and they brought before God and alien fire that He had not commanded them. A fire came forth from before God and consumed them, and they died before God

There is a great deal we can learn from the story of Nadav and Avihu. In some ways it is the most straight forward story we have and in others it is the least clear of all the stories we can learn from. We know exactly what they did wrong. Except we just don't know exactly what they did wrong. A great number of commentators try to explain what they did and why. I have no interest in delving into all the reasons now but permit me a slight tangent. Purim having happened so recently I feel like I should at the very least mention the *midrash* in Midrash Rabbah (12:1) that lets us know that they were really drunk, and that's why God killed them. The *midrash* derives this from the juxtaposition of the pasuk commanding the sons of Aaron not to drink intoxicating wine which follows after the death of Nadav and Avihu. I always sort of liked the moral there - it seems like the same message parents have been telling kids for the last 2000 years: Don't get drunk or something terrible will happen to you. On the bright side I'm not a Kohen, so I should be fine. (Bad news for you though Professor Cohen)

Joking aside, I would like to examine one possible aspect of their actions and why it was not acceptable. I think that if we take the most generous explanation of the Sifra (and assume they weren't all liquored up) then Nadav and Avihu wanted to do something nice for God. They wanted to give God a present if you will. What could be wrong with that? Well it seems that what's wrong with it is God didn't ask for it. Samuel told Saul, "Does God delight in elevation-offerings as in obedience to the voice of God? Behold - to obey is better than a choice offering, to be attentive than the fat of rams" (Samuel I 15:22). What the intent was is irrelevant! God is much less interested in intent than in action. There is a great deal we can learn from this. Even if we say that Nadav and Avihu were acting *l'shma* and were still destroyed, how much more so those who are working to change

the Torah and its meaning *lo l'shma*?! How many times have I heard someone presume to tell me what God wants and how their acting this way is what God wants even though it is contrary to the Torah. I have no idea what God wants except what is given to us in God's Torah.

Rav Hirsch explains in his writings on the month of Adar that the description Haman gives of the Jews is correct - we are scattered abroad and dispersed among the people. Our laws are different from others. Rav Hirsch explains that the reason this description is as accurate today as it was in the times of Ester is we do not change the Law to suit our needs - we change to suit the needs of the Law. Regular law changes for the people, we see it all the time every day. New laws are put into effect, old ones reinterpreted all for the good of a people or a nation. We do not have that right or that luxury. Those who try to change the Law fade away.

We must all try to remember the story of Nadav and Avihu, who perhaps even tried to do something for God *l'shma*, but it was not what God wanted. It was not one of Gods laws. *Kal V'chomer* those people who try to change Gods laws for their own ends, even if it is only because of what they think God might like or want. We know what God wants - it is in the Torah. We should try and follow the Torah to the best of our abilities and not add or subtract from it in any circumstance.

Minyan Times

| | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Friday Mincha | 5:45 PM |
| Kabbalat Shabbat | After Mincha |
| Saturday Shacharit | 8:45 AM |
| Saturday Mincha | 6:50 PM |
| Saturday Maariv | 8:11 PM |

Things to Anticipate

- Pesach. Yep, it's not so far off now.
- A Shabbaton with Penn - still planning.
- Not Yavneh on Ice. It won't work out, I'm afraid.