



RABBI JUDAH

MISCHEL

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Dream On

In 1940, after suffering the loss of almost his entire family and community, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman — the legendary visionary and builder of Torah with few equals in all of Jewish history, the Ponovezher Rav, *zt”l*— arrived in Eretz Yisrael.

As the German Holocaust raged, the prevailing mood in Eretz Yisrael was one of darkness and gloom. Reports had begun to filter in of the unimaginable atrocities and mass murder of Jews in death camps. The threat of Nazi invasion of the Holy Land also loomed as the German war machine showed no sign of slowing down.

With this as a backdrop, the Ponovezher Rav gazed toward the uninhabited sand dunes beyond the ramshackle, scattered homes at the edge of the fledgling community of Bnei Brak. There, he declared, he would dedicate himself to rebuilding the Ponovezh Yeshivah, which had been destroyed in Lithuania. At a time when Jews could barely muster the strength to ensure their basic needs and survival, he began speaking with holy audacity and optimism, declaring, “Days are coming when there will be millions of Jews in Eretz Yisrael!”

While all respected the Ponovezher Rav as a major talmid chacham and towering giant of Torah, word spread that in the face of such intense personal suffering and

tragedy, he had become delusional or even lost his mind. After all, what sane person would, under such communal burdens and anxieties, run to purchase desolate land and insist that a great Torah center would be rebuilt there even stronger than before. What’s more, there were barely a handful of yeshiva students of age in Israel at the time! Yet the Rav continued to insist on his plans, actively fundraising and encouraging others to join his efforts.



Even Rav Yitzchok Isaac haLevi Herzog, *zt”l*, then the Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael, attempted to reason with his peer, “With all respect, *Kavod haRav*, you’re dreaming.”

“Yes, I am dreaming...” replied the Ponovezher Rav with a kind smile, “but my eyes are open and I am wide awake!”

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וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהֵי ה' בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֲבִיךָ
אֶל־תִּירָא כִּי־אִתְּךָ אֲנֹכִי וּבְרַכְתִּיךָ וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ בְּעֶבֶר
אַבְרָהָם עֲבָדִי:

“That night Hashem appeared to him and said, “I am the God of your father Avraham. Fear not, for I am with you, and I will bless you and increase your offspring for the sake of My servant Avraham.”

It is not coincidental that the Ribbono shel Olam’s reassurance to Yitzchak Avinu took place in a night vision, a dream state.

Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato in *Derech Hashem* explains that dreams arise during sleep when upon Hashem's decree, the *neshamah* (soul) perceives a spiritual stimulus, and transmits it through the *nefesh* (animal soul) to the *dimyon* (imagination). This inner transmission mixes with pre-existing images within one's imagination, and results in 'dreams'. Dreams can therefore reveal the will, and the providence and light of God within the soul of man. In its purest form, a dream may express Ruach haKodesh and prophecy, hints about the future, or metaphoric messages.

We now mark Rosh Chodesh Kislev.

The Arizal teaches that each of the twelve months of the year corresponds to one of the twelve *Avnei Choshen*, the precious stones found on the breastplate of the Kohen Gadol. Each stone, its color, name and Biblical source, reveals the hidden potential of the particular month it represents. Kislev, the ninth month according to the Biblical calendar cycle, is represented by the ninth gemstone embedded on the Choshen: the *Achlama* (amethyst), whose Hebrew root, *chalam*, literally means "to dream". Rebbe Nachman of Breslov explains that this is an allusion to Kislev's role as 'the month of dreams', and points out that within the parshios read this month, including our sedra, as well as Vayeitze, Vayeshev and Miketz, we read of no less than nine significant dreams.

In the coming weeks we will continue to encounter dreams in the parshiyos. This includes Yaakov Avinu's inspiring and symbolic vision of a *sulam mutzav artza, v'rosho magia haShamayma*, "a ladder that extends into the Heavens, with Angels ascending

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and descending upon it” — his subconscious vision of our existential struggle to balance our physical reality in this material world and our striving for transcendence and spirituality. This dream teaches about the challenges and ‘ups and downs’ that we face in our *Avodas Hashem*, and the attitude of perseverance that we must maintain to succeed.

We explore Ya'akov's enigmatic dreams of various types of sheep, as well as those of his beloved son, the “Master of Dreams”, Yosef haTzadik. The bundles of wheat and stars and celestial beings are bowing; the butler and baker are seeing their destinies; Pharaoh dreams prophetically of cows and bundles, and all of these textual contemplations take place for us during the month of Kislev.

So often we become frustrated by challenges and lose sight of our goals, giving up on our dreams and aspirations for personal greatness. In a month when we read of the continuity of Jewish life through challenging times and triumph of Yaakov Avinu over the external, physical world of Esav, the month in which we will light the Chanukah candles and relive miracles that dispel spiritual darkness — we have the ability to strengthen and reignite our inner world, and re-inspire ourselves again and again.

May we be “wide awake” and blessed with faith and resolve to believe in ourselves and our ability to achieve greatness... and may all our holy dreams and desires be fulfilled for good!

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Thank you to Rav Hanoach Teller, beloved author, teacher and guide, for relating the above story... and so much more. ■