



Parashat Vayetze 5772 - #212

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On the Parashah... Yaakov's Dream

[Tal Chermon]

Yaakov emerged from the previous parashah ready to perform two tasks: the moralization of the physical world and the advancement of the spiritual world. Yaakov was destined to establish both the means and the tools for fulfilling our objectives and to improve and uplift the very soul, the very purpose, of our existence (Orot, Orot Ha-Techiyah, p. 16).

When Yaakov left Beer Sheva, running away from his brother Esav, his situation was far from ideal. He was homeless, unmarried, and completely penniless. He was the first exile in our history. What did the future hold for him? What would become of him? These questions must have gnawed away at Yaakov while he fled. But then he had a dream. There are different types of dreams. There are lofty dreams, which are sparks of prophecy, and there are dreams that are complete nonsense. "A man is shown in his dreams only those things about which he has given great thought" (Berachot 55b). The content of the dream therefore depends on the identity of the dreamer and the quality of his thoughts (an example of this is given in the Gemara (ibid. 56) when Shevor Malka, the King of Persia, said to the Talmudic Rabbi, Shmuel: "People say that you are a sage. If this is really so, tell me what I will dream

about tonight." Shmuel answered him: "You will dream that you have been routed by the Roman army, have been taken prisoner, and are forced to grind date pits with a golden mill." The strangeness of this answer bothered the king so much that he thought about it the entire day and, sure enough, dreamt about it that night). Yaakov's dream reflects his innermost thoughts, and his *raison d'etre* in life (Moreh Nevuchim part 1, chap. 36). There are two elements in his dream. The first is the Divine promise: "I am G-d...The Land upon which you are lying I will give to you and to your descendants. Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth. You shall burst forth and spread to the West, East, North and South...I am with you. I will protect you wherever you go and bring you back to this Land. I will not leave you until I have fully kept this promise to you (Bereshit 28:13-15)."

Hashem's words assure Yaakov that, in contrast to his present pitiful and humiliating state, his future will be glorious, and he will be guarded and protected in the long trek that leads to it.

The second element of the dream is the vision of the ladder. "And behold he dreamed and a ladder was set on the earth and its top reached up toward heaven" (Bereshit 28:12). The ladder links heaven with earth. It is "set towards" earth (*ibid.*), i.e. from heavenly matters it directs itself towards earthly concerns. But it also "reaches heaven" (*ibid.*), meaning that all earthly needs draw their significance from heavenly considerations.

The ladder is Yaakov himself, who is both heavenly and earthly. On the one hand he embodies spirituality, which is used to improve the physical world. On the other, he lives a **material** existence, which is governed by the spirit. These are the two faces of Yaakov.

The vision is not static. There is dynamic movement as "the angels of G-d ascend and descend it [the ladder]" (*ibid.*). They ascend to heaven to charge themselves with Divine spirituality and then descend to illuminate the world with it. The righteous do not suffice with a personal spiritual elevating experience, but they return to the mundane world and use their spiritual acquisition to improve it (Moreh Nevuchim 1, chap. 15). In the Akeidah experience, Avraham reached such awe-inspiring spiritual heights that the youths who had accompanied him on the way were not allowed to be present. Despite the fact that the two attendants were none other than the two outstanding personalities, Yishmael and Eliezer (Rashi on Bereshit 22:5), Avraham instructs them: "Stay here with the **donkey**, while I and the lad go yonder" (Bereshit 22:5). Avraham's trust in Eliezer was so profound that he sent him to find a wife for Yitzchak who would share in the momentous task of founding the Jewish Nation. Furthermore, it is said of him: "He drew forth teachings from his Rav and transmitted them to others" (Yoma 28b). Despite these qualities, with regard to the sublime spiritual revelation at the Akeidah, Yishmael and Eliezer were equivalent to the donkey. The verse says: "stay here with the donkey" and our Rabbis add that in

relation to the Akeidah: "You are people who are no better than a donkey" (Yevamot 62a). This event would be so extraordinarily incomprehensible that if witnessed by them they would either be struck mad or lose all faith in G-d. Avraham therefore proceeded alone and ascended to such heights that it was beyond the grasp of ordinary human morality. Did Avraham remain in his heavenly state, detached from and unconcerned with the prosaic world? No! "And Avraham **returned** to his lads and they **arose** and went **together** to Beer Sheva" (Bereshit 22:19). Despite his soul's leap to loftiness, Avraham remained attached to his material surroundings and endeavored to inspire them. He stooped down to the lads, who had remained at the level of the donkey, and offered them a helping hand in order to uplift and advance them (Olat Re'eiyah vol. 1, p. 96). Moreover, his very descent paved the way for the next ascent.

Then Yaakov awoke from the dream, "And he was frightened. He exclaimed: 'How awe-inspiring is this place! It must be G-d's Temple. It is the gate to heaven'" (Bereshit 29:17). He did not attribute the privilege of this vision to his own self-worth, but to the sanctity of the place. He thus did not even thank Hashem for this prophetic vision and for all the promises made to him. He knew that through the holiness of Eretz Yisrael, which was the "house of G-d and the gate of heaven," he would be able to fulfill his task of connecting heaven and earth. The Divine Presence existed here on earth and the mundane aspired towards heaven (Kuzari – section 2). "The Holy One Blessed Be He rolled together the whole of Eretz Yisrael under him [Yaakov]" (Rashi on Bereshit 28:13). Yaakov dreamed that in this special environment of Eretz Yisrael he would manage to perform the task for which he was so well suited: uniting heaven and earth.

Rav Aviner on...

The Waterpipe (Nargilah) – the Innocent Killer

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Toldot 5772 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Don't think the waterpipe (Nargilah) is an innocent device for pleasure and fun. This is a misconception based on two ideas: 1. The smoke is filtered by the water, so there's no danger. 2. It smells and tastes like the fruit that are pictured on the package. What could be more innocent than fruit, sugar and honey?

These ideas are in fact big mistakes. Smoking a nargilah is a lot more dangerous than smoking cigarettes, and for several reasons, any one of which should suffice to prevent one from indulging in it: 1. The water provides only a partial filter. 2. The water's moistness soothes the irritation to the breathing passages, so one can inhale the smoke more deeply. 3. Moreover, the water can cause edema in the lungs. 4. The smoke does contain tobacco, and is not supervised the way cigarettes are. It exudes a lot of carcinogens that cause: lung cancer, gum cancer, lip cancer and bladder cancer. 5. Passing the waterpipe around from one person to another can spread various diseases: herpes of the lips, tuberculosis, bronchitis, glandular fever, eczema and other skin diseases. 6. The ritual of smoking a waterpipe takes much more time than smoking a cigarette. It takes 5-7 minutes to smoke a cigarette, and it exudes 0.5 to 0.6 liters of smoke. It takes 70-200 minutes to smoke a waterpipe, giving off 50-600 puffs of 0.05 to 0.25 liters each. Thus, smoking a waterpipe is the equivalent of smoking about a hundred cigarettes! 7. The package does in fact say that the amount of tar and resin it contains

is zero. That's very nice, but they forgot to point out that this material is produced as a by-product when the tobacco is burning. 8. Let's not talk about the damage caused to the fetus, nor about the damage to the non-smokers all around.

As is known, according to Jewish law it is forbidden to do dangerous things. It's forbidden to take risks, even slight ones. Whoever does so violates, "Guard yourselves very well" (Devarim 4:15). Thus, for example, one is not allowed to cross a rickety bridge if there is any danger that its collapse would lead to a person's death, even if the risk of collapse is very low, as explained in Rambam's Hilchot Rotzeach U-Shemirat Ha-Nefesh.

Additionally, it is forbidden to behave in a manner that harms one's body, even if each isolated act poses no danger at all. After all, a single cigarette or waterpipe session won't kill you. Yet the cumulative effect is very dangerous, as Rambam explains (Hilchot De'ot, Chapter 4). There, Rambam explains that one has to conduct oneself in a healthy manner. This is called walking in G-d's pathways. Also, in Chapter 1 he explains that this is a mitzvah from the Torah: "Walk in His pathways" (Devarim 28:9).

Don't say it's not dangerous, that the research doesn't mean a thing, or that it is a fact that not all die from it. That's nonsense. It's true that 100 years ago they didn't know how dangerous a waterpipe is, but now it's clear to all, beyond any doubt.

Here's an interesting example: In 1970, when those grave research studies began to be publicized, 64% of the physicians smoked. By 1980 only 10% smoked.

True, it's hard to stop smoking.

Smoking actually involves two addictions, one physical and one psychological.

Everything depends on one's willpower. Even if a person is weak, however, all hope is not lost.

He can cut down on his smoking slowly, gradually. One's physical and psychological dependency will gradually decrease as well.

Let us just point out that even before 1970 they knew it was dangerous, and many physicians and rabbis forbade smoking.

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook hung a note in Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav telling the boys to stop smoking, and following his request, all the Zionist yeshivot stopped. In the yeshiva high schools there are some smokers, but when they reach post-high-school yeshivot they see their heroes of Torah and military service do not smoke, and then they understand that there is no connection between smoking and masculinity, or between smoking and femininity.

Not smoking also saves a lot of money and saves one from having terrible breath and disgusting yellow teeth. Every eight seconds someone in the world dies from smoking. That's five million people a year, and the number is rising. During the past 100 years, 100 million have died from smoking.

In our country ten thousand die from smoking every year, with a sixth of them dying from passive smoking - the wife, children or work mates of a smoker. And, as I have already said, waterpipes are 100 times more dangerous than cigarettes.

On average, a smoker shortens his life by fourteen years. Terrible. To say nothing of the awful suffering endured by thousands of smoking-related patients.

Smoke contains 5,000 toxic substances, of which fifty are carcinogenic, and, once more, waterpipes are 100 times worse. So, please, throw your waterpipe in the trash. And if you haven't started yet, don't start, even once.

We are in favor of clean air. Clean lungs, a clean mouth, clean living. So smokers: clean up your act. Then we can all breathe more easily.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Hilchot Sheleg – Laws of Snow

Muktzeh on Shabbat?

Q: Is snow muktzeh on Shabbat?

A: The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 300:11) says that one may not crush ice on Shabbat. This implies that snow is not muktzeh, since the only problem is crushing. But perhaps the Shulchan Aruch is only discussing snow which fell before Shabbat, and snow which fell on Shabbat is muktzeh based on "nolad" (something created on Shabbat). One can argue, however, that snow is like rain and rain is not muktzeh on Shabbat (Mishneh Berurah ibid. 338:30). Even though the rain was not necessarily in the clouds before Shabbat, it is not muktzeh. As such, what is the different between rain and snow?! Some explain that they are not the same since snow is never in the clouds. Tiny drops fall and they become snow as they come close to the ground. Some therefore say that snow is "nolad" (Igrat Moshe, Orach Chaim 5:22). This is not exact, because the rain is also not necessarily in the clouds and formed before Shabbat. There are tiny drops in the clouds and they thicken on Shabbat and become rain, just like snow. There are therefore many authorities who rule that snow is not muktzeh (Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata 15:36 and 16:44 in the name of Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank and Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. This is also the opinion of Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef). Similarly, many authorities allow putting water into a freezer to make ice on Shabbat.

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