Jewish Tribune – Mikeitz

**Royal Dreams**

Like the sedrah, the haftorah deals with royal dreams. It is not often that we read this haftorah, as parshas Mikeitz so often coincides with Chanukah and the Chanukah haftorah is read instead.

The haftorah for Mikeitz begins with Shlomo Hamelech waking from a dream. It was a dream that set the tone for his reign and had significant repercussions for the future of Klal Yisroel.

In this prophetic dream, the twelve-year-old, newly crowned king was asked by Hashem what blessing he desired for his new position. Shlomo Hamelech asked for wisdom so that he could judge the Jewish people well.

He could have asked for many things, a long life, good health, wealth or power but instead he famously asked for wisdom. Pleased with Shlomo Hamelech’s altruistic choice, HKBH promised him not only unprecedented wisdom, that had never been before or since, but also the wealth and honour that he did not ask for.

I once heard a fascinating question from Dayan Ehrentreu ztl about this. Imagine you visited a first rate kollel and individually asked some of the avreichim what their dreams were, what their deepest wish would be. I would imagine the responses would relate to greatness in Torah. A deep desire to know and master kol haTorah kula. To aspire to know Torah like Rav Chaim Kanievsky.

I am thinking of one friend who still in kollel after many years and his family attest that aside from spending time with his growing family, nothing interests him other than Torah. If I were to say to him, “It’s a long winter zman, take Thursday evening seder off and let me treat you to a fancy meal in a prestigious restaurant.” The prospect of a good steak simply doesn’t talk to him.

So, asks Dayan Ehrenteu, what exactly is the greatness of Shlomo Hamelechs’ reply to HKBH? What makes his desire for wisdom so special? Hundreds, if not thousands of bnei Torah would answer the same!

The answer says the Dayan, is that it was, as the possuk tells us, “בַּחֲלוֹם הַלָּיְלָה”, in a dream in the middle of the night. A response in these circumstances represent a person’s deepest and most genuine desire. It was not a request made because this is what the questioner wanted to hear or what you think is an appropriate response. If you wake someone up in the middle of the night and ask him a question, often that instinctive response is the real answer, what you really feel. No time to airbrush anything.

Shlomo Hamelech’s response represents his real and deep desire for wisdom and to judge Klal Yisroel well.

And that is exactly what happened. After awaking from the dream, we are told the famous story of two women who came to Shlomo HaMelech, both claiming the same baby. The young king’s new wise and understanding heart is put to the test and this is his first opportunity to demonstrate this extra-ordinary wisdom and understanding.

Shlomo HaMelech famously asks for a sword and in a scene of unbearable tension, he orders that the baby be cut in half. The reaction of the two women is very different. The true mother quickly objects and says that her son not be killed and should rather be given to the other woman. The other woman shows no such compassion and wants the child cut in half.

Shlomo HaMelech awards the child to the real mother and with that, the haftorah concludes that all of Klal Yisroel were in awe of the young king.

And it all began with a burning desire for wisdom. Once granted, not only does it set the tone for his kingship but it also gave us Mishlei, Koheles and Shir Hashirim.

Some years ago, I wanted to brainstorm with colleagues about how to improve kodesh at Hasmonean. Rather than talk in a classroom or even over a coffee, the three of us went on a hike.

I asked my two colleagues, if Hasmonean bought a lottery ticket and won, and the lottery win was not just a “mere” ten million pounds, but a Euro roll over of one hundred and fifty million pounds, what would they do with the money. After giving Rebbes and other members of staff a good pay rise, it was time to dream of what could be done in a school with few financial constraints.

Dreaming is important. It is worth dreaming from time to time. What would I do if I won the lottery. How would I like my life to look in one year’s time, or in five or twenty years’ time. And what is my plan to get there.

And then to really question if this is this my deepest and most genuine desire. Or am I just walking the walk and talking the talk.

Dreams that are “בַּחֲלוֹם הַלָּיְלָה” often indicate the real ratzon of a person. And it was that deep desire of Shlomo Hamelech that so pleased HKBH.

It is rare that we lein this haftora and the related lessons and explanations are many, but it is certainly worth the wait!

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