

“WOULD WE BE HAPPIER IF WE KNEW WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BRING?”

In perek [chapter] 18 pasuk 10, Moshe Rabbeinu speaks to us against the practice of divinations, omens, or sorcery –to foretell the future.

HaShem is telling us through Moshe, NOT to resort to these means for whatever we must know about the future He will inform us through our Nevi'im [Prophets] or some other manner. But, since it is human nature to want to know the future and utilize whatever means to pursue that end, the Torah forbids us to use the above mentioned practices to foretell the future. To G-d, these practices are abominable. We, the Jewish people have to have the Bitachon [faith] that HaShem would provide us with whatever knowledge or information that is essential for us to know.

In pasuk 13 Moshe states that each one of us should be Tamim [wholehearted]. Despite the means that are available to the idolaters to inquire into the future, we should follow G-d with perfect faith, without even feeling a need to know what will happen in the future.

The Midrash teaches that Shlomo HaMelech knew the language of the Sicha haTziporim [the language of the birds]. An individual once came to Shlomo HaMelech and requested that the wise king should teach him this language. The king refused, but the man persisted and begged day after day until the king finally relented and taught him Sicha haTziporim. One day this individual was walking in the field when he heard two birds talking to one another. One bird told the other “You see this person; his entire flock of cattle are going to die within the next two weeks.” The man quickly went home and immediately sold his entire flock of cattle at whatever price he could obtain. Sure enough, two weeks later the entire flock died. The man avoided a major financial setback!

Some time later, the man was again walking in the field and heard one bird tell the other that the fellow that just passed is going to have his house and everything in it burn down within the next two weeks. Again, he sold his house and all of his possessions. Sure enough, two weeks later the house burned to the ground. Again, he felt good, for he avoided a catastrophe!

When the next week he went out to the field, he heard one bird tell the other, “That man is going to die the next week”. He frantically ran back to Shlomo HaMelech and desperately asked for his advice what to do. Shlomo HaMelech said, “I told you that I did not want to teach you the language of the birds, but you persisted! Apparently you did something terribly wrong and HaShem wanted to give you a punishment, He was going to punish you through the death of your cattle, and that would have been your Kaparah [atonement]. The punishment would have been for your benefit- the financial setback would have forced you to think about your life and what you are doing wrong so that you

would have done Teshuvah. However, you ‘outsmarted HaShem’ and found out- through the birds- how to avoid that punishment, and you never did Teshuvah.

Then HaKadosh Baruch Hu was going to get you to do Teshuvah by burning down your house, but again, you avoided the tragedy and hence, the opportunity to do Teshuvah. Your sins however now remain and the only option left for HaShem is to bring about your death as the only Kaparah available.

This Midrash has a powerful message for us to internalize, especially now in the month of Elul. We look back at the year that passed and think of all those mishaps, and financial losses that “the birds predicted”. We didn’t know, so we accepted in good faith. Now let us contemplate on the proper Teshuvah, for “*ANI LE’DODI, VE’DODI LI*” Shabbat Shalom from Yerushalayim,

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT SHOFTIM:

- 1 –What is the one qualification that the Torah insists a man must have to be appointed a “KING OF ISRAEL?**
- 2-If 5 witnesses testify that Mr X did such and such, and 2 witnesses testify that he did not do it. How would the judges rule?**
- 3 - “Baal Tash’chit” –forbids us to destroy things wantonly. Where is the source for that in our parasha?**
- 4--What did a Jewish king in Israel have to carry with him all day and night and at all times?S**
- 5--There are 4 category’s of exemptions for a soldier to be excused from battle in a Milchemet Reshut . (note- In a Milchemet Mitzvah –such as self defense war such as we are presently involved in, there are NO exemptions). Can you find 3 or all 4??**
- 6- How can we recite a Bracha which states, “Blessed are You HaShem, who commanded us to perform this Mitzvah”, on a Mitzvah which Gd did Not command us, but rather , the Rabbis commanded us, such as Ner Chanukah?**
- 7-When a person is sentenced to a death penalty by the Sanhedrin, who are the executioners??**
- 8“Tzedek, Tzedek shall you pursue” [16:20]. What does the double expression come to teach us?**

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