

Parshas Bechukosai

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Over the last few weeks, I have been sharing *divrei Torah* by writing instead of presenting them by speaking in *shul*. Writing gives me an opportunity to share information in a way that I could not do in *shul*. The *dvar Torah* below, although being self-contained, is also the first half of a two-part series. This week, I will begin with an explanation of a *possuk* in the *parsha*, and a dream that one of the *Achronim* had about this *possuk*. The dream explains how *Rabbeinu Tam* got the title "Tam", and I will address the validity of this explanation. I will discuss the *sefer Shailos U'Teshuvos Min Hashomayim*, which sheds light on both the title "Tam" and the validity of dreams. Next week, I will return to the topic of dreams, and present examples of interpretations of *pessukim* which were revealed in dreams.

In this week's *parsha*, Moshe *Rabbeinu* warns *Klal Yisroel* what will happen if they do not keep the *Torah*, *chas ve'sholom*. One of the consequences will be (*Vayikra* 26,20) -

וְתָם לְרִיק כֹּחֲכֶם וְלֹא תִתֵּן אֶרְצְכֶם אֶת יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הָאֶרֶץ לֹא יִתֵּן פְּרִיֹו

"And your strength will be spent in vain, and your land will not produce crops, and the trees of the land will not produce fruit".

The *Toras Kohanim* provides an example of this curse -

זֶה שֶׁהוּא מְשִׂיא אֶת בִּתּוֹ וּנּוֹתֵן לָהּ מִמּוֹן הַרְבֵּה וְלֹא הִסְפִּיקוּ שִׁבְעַת יְמֵי הַמִּשְׁתָּה לְצֵאת עַד שֶׁמָתָה בִּתּוֹ נִמְצָא קוֹבֵר אֶת בִּתּוֹ וּמֵאֲבָד אֶת מִמּוֹנוֹ.

"This is one who marries off his daughter and give her a lot of money, and his daughter dies before the conclusion of *sheva brachos*, resulting in him burying his daughter and losing his money".

*Tosafos* in *Kesuvos* (47b) relates a similar real-life story. There was a person who promised to give a dowry to the young man who was marrying his daughter. Sadly, the *kallah* died soon after the wedding. *Rabbeinu Tam* was asked whether the father-in-law was still obligated to give the dowry. *Rabbeinu Tam paskened* that, because the *kallah* died before the money was transferred, the father-in-law did not need to pay the dowry. However, if the father-in-law would have already given the money, he would not be able to claim it back after his daughter died. This is consistent with the *Toras Kohanim* cited above, that the father would lose both his daughter and his money.

*Tosefos* then tells us that *Rabbeinu Tam* instituted a *takana*, "לא מכח ההלכה", overriding normative *halacha*, that if the *kallah* dies within the first year of marriage the *choson* must return the dowry to the father-in-law. *Tosefos* concludes that this was a temporary *takana*, and *Rabbeinu Tam* rescinded it at some later date.

*Rabbeinu Tam*, in his *Sefer Hayashar* (*siman* 788), provides further details regarding the parameters of this *takana* that a *choson* must return the dowry. He concludes -

"אחרי כן זכרתי מה ששנוי בתורת כהנים, ונתתי הודאה למקום שזכינו לצאת מהיות כראויים לתוכחות ששנינו בפרשת התוכחה 'ותם לריק כחכם' ... וכשם שיצאנו מזאת כך נצא מכל גזירות רעות".

After that [*takana* was enacted] I remembered that which is taught in the *Toras Kohanim*, and I gave thanks to *Hashem* that we have merited getting away from being fit for the rebuke that is taught in the *parshas ha'tochacha* 'and your strength will be spent in vain' ... and just as we have walked away from this so to shall we walk away from all bad decrees".

In other words, the *tochacha* of the *Toras Kohanim* is that the father will suffer losing both his daughter and his money. *Rabbeinu Tam's takana* allowed the father to at least get his money back. *Rabbeinu Tam* thereby lessened the consequences of this portion of the *tochacha*.

It is interesting to note that *Rabbeinu Tam's* actual name was Yaakov. How did it come to be that he was known by the appellation 'Tam'? There is a commentary on the *Toras Kohanim* called '*Hagahas Maharid*' written by *Rav Yaakov Dovid Biederman* (1808-1863), who was a *Rov* in Koshnitz. In this week's *parsha* he writes –

"נתגלה לי בחלום בשנת תרי"ד בחדש אייר שלכן נקרא רבי יעקב איש תם רבינו תם, עבור שהוא תיקן תיקון חזרת הנדוניא וביטל זו הקללה של ותם לריק".

"It was revealed to me in a dream in the year 1854 in the month of *Iyar*, that this is the reason that *Rabbeinu* Yaakov Ish Tam is called *Rabbeinu* Tam, because he enacted the *takana* of returning the dowry and nullified the curse of "*vetam le'rik*" - 'and will be spent in vain'.

When it comes to dreams, we have a principle (*Sanhedrin* 30a) that *דברי חלומות לא מעלין ולא מורידין*, dreams do not change things. Although this is an interesting dream, it seems somewhat unlikely that this is truly the reason he was called *Rabbeinu* Tam, especially in light of the fact that *Tosefos* writes that he rescinded the *takana*.

There is a simpler explanation for the name of *Rabbeinu* Tam, which *Rav* Biederman himself alludes to. The *possuk* (*Bereishis* 25:27) says *וַיֵּקֶבֶב אִישׁ תָּם יָשֵׁב אֹהֳלִים*, "And Yaakov was an *ish tam* who dwelt in tents". The tent of this *possuk* refers to a *Bais Hamedrash*, as translated by *Targum Onkelus*. Although *Rabbeinu* Tam's real name was Yaakov, his *talmidim* gave him the title "*Ish Tam*" based on this *possuk*. He is actually not the only *Rishon* that received an appellation based on a *possuk*. For example, another one of the *Rishonim* is known as *Rav* Yosef Bechor Shor. His actual name was Yosef, but he was called Bechor Shor based on the *possuk* (*Devorim* 33,13-17) *וַיִּזְוֶה יוֹסֵף בְּכוֹר שְׁוֹרוֹ הַדֶּרֶךְ לּוֹ*.

This explanation for the name of *Rabbeinu* Tam can already be found in a *sefer* written hundreds of years ago. *Rav* Dovid Conforte (1618-1619) in his *sefer Koreh Ha'doros* (page 14a) writes

"רבינו יעקב בן רבינו מאיר, ונקרא רבינו תם דרך גדולה על שם הכתוב שאומר ויעקב איש תם".

"*Rabbeinu* Yaakov ben *Rabbeinu* Meir is called *Rabbeinu* Tam as an expression of greatness, based on the *possuk* which states - and Yaakov was an *ish tam*".

In fact, there is another *Rishon* named Yaakov who was occasionally referred to as 'Tam', and that is *Reb* Yaakov of Marvese. The *Chida* points this out in his *sefer Shem HaGedolim*. The *Chida* (*Shem HaGedolim erech 'Rabbeinu Ephrayim Bar Shimshon'*) quotes a *Rishon* who records a *chiddush* that he heard from "*Rabbeinu* Tam". "*Rabbeinu* Tam" told that *Rishon* about a certain question that he posed to the "*baal hachalom*" and shared the answer that he received. The *Chida* writes that this "*Rabbeinu* Tam" is *Reb* Yaakov of Marvese, who often asked questions to the "*baal hachalom*".

*Rav* Yaakov of Marvese knew how to perform a *sheilas chalom*. He was a *tzaddik* who knew how to use *segulos* and holy *shaimos* in order to generate a dream in which he received an answer to a question that he posed before going to sleep. He often asked halachic questions in order to receive a *psak* from heaven. These *pesakim* are recorded in the *sefer Shailos U'Teshuvos Min HaShomayim*. The *Chida* presumes that the "*Rabbeinu* Tam" who asked a question to the *baal hachalom* was undoubtedly *Rav* Yaakov of Marvese.

The *Chida* reiterates this in his *sefer Shailos U'Teshuvos Chaim Sha'ul*. In the very first *teshuva* of the *sefer* he quotes one of the *Achronim* who cites a *psak* that "*Rabbeinu* Tam" received in *sheilas chalom*. The *Chida* points out that this was not the more well-known *Rabbeinu* Tam who was *Rashi's* grandson, but rather *Rav* Yaakov of Marvese. The *Chida* explains that both of them were named Yaakov and received the title "Tam" based on the *possuk* "And Yaakov was an *ish tam*". Clearly, the *Chida* understands that the name *Rabbeinu* Tam was not due to a specific *takanah* relating to the word "*tam*" in this week's *parsha*, but rather a general title and honor bestowed on him. To quote the *Chida* -

"רבינו תם הלז שעשה שאלת חלום איננו רבינו תם נכדו של רש"י ... רק הוא רבינו יעקב הלוי ממרו"ש, חד מרבוותא קמאי דהוה שאיל שלאתא בספיקא דהלכתא מן השמים ומשיבים לו ... וקורין לו רבינו תם לפעמים להרב הזכר על שם 'יעקב איש תם', וכעין שקורין לרבינו נכד רש"י שהיה שמו רבינו יעקב".

"This *Rabbeinu* Tam that performed a *shailas chalom* is not *Rabbeinu* Tam the grandson of *Rashi* ... rather he is *Rabbeinu* Yaakov HaLevi of Marvese, one of the *Rabbis* of yore who would ask questions from heaven regarding halachic doubts, and he received answers ... and this aforementioned *Rav* is occasionally called *Rabbeinu* Tam based on [the *possuk*] "And Yaakov was an *ish tam*", just as they called *Rabbeinu* [Tam] the grandson of *Rashi* whose [real] name was *Rabbeinu* Yaakov".

As we have seen, dreams are not always reliable. For this reason, the *sefer Teshuvos Min HaShomayim* is somewhat controversial. Should one give weight to these halachic responses, or should we apply the principal that לא בשמים היא, *Torah* is not decided through messages from heaven (*Baba Metzuya* 59b)? Rav Reuven Margolies discusses this question at length in the masterful introduction to his edition of the *Teshuvos Min HaShomayim*.

It should be noted that there are two types of dream revelations of *Torah*. There are dreams which come as a response to a *shailas chalom*, like those of Rav Yaakov of Marvese. There are also dreams that come spontaneously to the recipient. These spontaneous dreams sometimes relate to a matter of halacha, such as the noted dream of the *Recanti* (quoted in *Bais Yosef O.C.* 651) that one should hold the *lulav* and *esrog* next to each other when performing the *mitzva*. A *tzaddik* may also have a spontaneous dream in which an explanation of a *possuk* is revealed to him. For example, the *Vilna Gaon* had a dream in which he received from Eliyohu *HaNavi* multiple interpretations of a *possuk* in *Parshas Shelach*. Unfortunately, we do not know what any of them were (see the introduction of Rav Chaim of Volozhin to the *Pirush Ha'Gr"a* on the *Sefer De'Tzniyusa*).

Although *paskening halacha* based on a dream may be debatable, there is little controversy regarding the interpretation of a *possuk* revealed in a dream. There are *shivim panim le'Totah*, and one explanation does not preclude another. Admittedly, it is not common to find passages in *sefarim* in which the author shares an interpretation of a *possuk* that he received spontaneously in a dream. After some thought I came up with five examples of this phenomenon, and I hope to share them with you next week.

Here are the five *pessukim* that have received dream interpretations, which I will *iy"H* present next week:

בְּחֻצוֹת וְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר הִרְיעוּ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ ה' (תהלים צח,ו)  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֲקִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲקִיָּה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲקִיָּה שְׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם (שמות ג,יד)  
אֶהְבֶּתִי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר ה' וְאָמַרְתֶּם בְּמֵה אֶהְבֶּתֵנוּ הֲלוֹא אִחַ עָשׂוּ לִיעֲקֹב נָאִם ה' וְאֶהֱבֵ אֶת יַעֲקֹב (מלאכי א,ב)  
אֵלֶּה יַעֲמְדוּ לְבָרַךְ אֶת הָעָם ... וְאֵלֶּה יַעֲמְדוּ עַל הַקְּלָלָה (דברים כז, יב-יג)  
וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל זֶה וְאָמַר קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ ה' צְבָאוֹת מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ (ישעיה ג,ו)