



"Would it be that My people listen to me, if Israel would go in My ways, I would subdue their enemies in a instant, and turn My hand against their foes."

King David, Psalm 81

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IN THIS ISSUE:

DR. KEYES' LETTER TO MESORA	1, 2
7 HEADED SERPENT	1, 4
THEY ARE KILLING US	1
FRIENDSHIP	2
WHAT ARE MEDRASHIM?	3
RESPONSE TO ISRAEL BOYCOTTERS	4

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Maimonides' 13 PRINCIPLES

THE BASIC FOUNDATIONS WHICH ALL JEWS MUST KNOW AS TRUE. WE URGE YOU TO READ THEM:
www.mesora.org/13principles.html

God's Existence Belief or Proof?

www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html

God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html

Letter to Mesora

DR. ALAN KEYES

I write to express my solidarity with the people of Israel in this difficult time, and to assure you of what I know you cannot doubt, that millions of Americans stand with Israel as well. We will remember the truth of Israel's honorable record, insist that others treat Israel in light of that truth, and not succumb the cowardly passions of the moment.

When the European Union asserts moral authority to coerce Israel into a shameful surrender of its just claims, we will remember that many Europeans sat on their hands and did nothing while millions of Jews were

(continued on page 2)

The Seven Headed Serpent

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

A gemara in Kiddushin 29b, records a fantastic story of a "mazik", (damager), which plagued the bais medrash of Abaye. Rav Yaakov bar Acha, upon witnessing his son's poor talmudic skills, ventured to this place of study, as he decided that he was more fit to learn than his son. When Abaye learned of his coming arrival, he urged all townspeople not to offer Rav Yaakov hospitality, perhaps a miracle will be performed for Rav Yaakov. It was stated in this gemara, that even two people who entered, even during the day were at risk due to this mazik. Rav Yaakov therefore stayed in the bais medrash overnight, and this mazik appeared to him as a seven-headed serpent (tanina). Rav Yaakov began to pray, and on every bowing of his head (to G-d) one of the heads fell off. The next morning, Rav Yaakov stated that had it not been for a miracle, he would have been in danger.

Many questions surface:

- 1) Why couldn't Abaye himself rid the bais medrash of this mazik?
- 2) What do 7 heads represent?
- 3) Why was this mazik found in the bais medrash, as opposed to somewhere else?
- 4) Why couldn't R. Yaakov rid it all at once, instead of only one head at each a bow?
- 5) How does tfila, prayer remove this mazik?
- 6) Is a mazik a real creature, or is it a metaphor for something else?
- 7) The serpent did not attack Rav Yaakov, or anyone for that matter. What then was the danger?
- 8) Why did Rav Yaakov attribute his success to a miracle? Did he not witness his actions himself?
- 9) What is the meaning of, "even two who enter by day are at danger"?
- 10) Why was the mazik also referred to as a "tanina" serpent?

I am always interested in showing the method in learning, in addition to discussing possible explanations. To do

(continued on page 4)



ASK YOUR CHILDREN:

"Does our prayer help God, or does it help us?"

Have your children email us with their answers: questions@mesora.org

They are Killing Us: A Reaction

JESSIE FISCHBEIN

As an American Jew, it is very easy to isolate what is happening to "them" in Israel from me. My Rabbi said (paraphrased), "Don't think that what is happening to the Jews in Israel is only happening in Israel. All Jews are at risk." As all Jews are at risk, and as this evoked a powerful emotional response in me, I am attempting to respond as is appropriate to the situation. Using "U'teshuva u'tefilla u'tzedaka ma'avirin es roa hag'zeira" as a guide. Repentance, prayer and tzedaka remove (?) the evil of the decree.

Repentance has a few components. Stop doing the sin, regret, acceptance that you will not do the sin again in the future, and verbal confession that you did the sin.

For sins that are not so easily abandoned, or character traits, I guess an approach would be introspection about whether or not your actions are in line with your values. (Prerequisite: what are your values?). If you value giving people the benefit of the doubt, are you acting accordingly?

Tefilla This is mainly what I wanted to talk about. I had a strong urge to daven for mercy after seeing this presentation. Tefilla is based on the idea that we are obligated/ have a right to ask Hashem for our needs (yes, those are contradictory).

We ask for our needs in the framework of the first three brachos (blessings) of Shemona Esrei (the silent Amida). If we do not have avana (concentration) during the first blessing, we are not yotze (did not fulfill the obligation to pray).

The theme of the first bracha is that Hashem, the One who related to the Avos (forefathers), relates to us because of them. ("remembers the kindnesses of the Patriarchs"). Because they lived their lives on a certain standard, with a certain purpose, Hashem made them into a nation to continue that purpose.

The purpose is to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy (kadosh) nation" whose way of life indicates the existence of Hashem. A nation that lives according to a set of principles that are clearly based on wisdom and truth. This does not refer merely to the laws of the Torah, but that the wisdom and truth should permeate all of our lives, in all of our actions. Hashem "brings a Redeemer" to the Patriarch's children's children, i.e., he relates to us, ultimately saving us, "for the sake of His name, with love." When we fulfill this purpose. When we live lives that reflect His existence. (the quotes are from the first blessing).

It is in this framework that we ask for all bakashos, requests. Now that we have clarified our purpose, and the framework in which Hashem redeems us (i.e., grants our requests), we hopefully underwent a change. Instead of person who is moved by desire (I regularly think of all sorts of things that I want), I have taken a moment to reflect on the purpose of all of the things that I want. What is my purpose and how do the things I want fit into that purpose? Now I am ready to ask for the things I want.

We do not change Hashem's mind with the request. When we make this change in ourselves, we have a new level of understanding and are different than we were before (hopefully). Maybe this will merit divine intervention.

We ask for mercy, that Jews stop being killed, that we will be safe, so that we can pursue the purpose He created us for. May we be able to change through our tefilla, and may Hashem help us.

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