

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



## THE SECRET IMMERSION

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion has the song of Ha'azinu. It is a song exhorting the Jewish people not to leave the path of Torah. This week is also Shabbos Shuva which is a Shabbos that reminds us to return to the path of Torah.

This leads us to the following true story.

Ari, a teenager, grew up in a traditional but non-orthodox home. His parents did not eat treif but they were not fully observant. Slowly, Ari became more knowledgeable of Torah and wanted to become more fully observant. One day he learned about the mitzvah to immerse vessels in a mikvah before they are used for food. He felt that it was improper for him to eat food cooked in pots, pans and dishes that were not immersed in a mikvah. With regard to most matters, his parents were very respectful of his observance. But when he brought the idea up to his parents his mother objected. She said, "We support your interest in

## MORE THAN JUST VIGOROUS EXERCISE

Taken from a discussion with Rav Hopper

Rambam writes "when one does teshuvah they must recite viduy (to confess their wrongdoing) in front of HaShem" in a different place he writes "It is a mitzvah to do teshuvah in front of HaShem". In both places Rambam underscores that both teshuvah and viduy must be done in front of HaShem. The implication of this detail is that the words used in the viduy reflect that one is speaking to HaShem and not simply reciting a confession to oneself.

Our Sages teach us that HaShem wanted to purify the Jewish people and therefore gave them Torah and mitzvos by which to accomplish this. HaShem does not want His people to fail in their quest for purity. Yet, He knows Man's shortcomings and knows that Man will stumble along in this quest. To that end He created teshuvah, thereby allowing those who fall to pull themselves up again and ultimately succeed. Since the purpose of teshuvah is to help us purify ourselves should it not be sufficient to do teshuvah by ourselves without confronting HaShem. Take for example the doctor who instructs his patient to cut back on sugar because it will damage his health. If, however, he does consume too much sugar he must do a half hour of vigorous exercise to counter the impact of the sugar. Is there any purpose for the patient to do this exercise in the presence of the doctor? Should he even inform the doctor that the exercise was done? Why then must we do our teshuvah in front of HaShem?

When one steals from another he rectifies his injustice by repaying him. However,

Judaism, but frankly we think it is disgusting to put our food utensils in a dirty mikvah where thousands of other people put their utensils. Who knows when it was last cleaned. We don't want to do it".

Ari was very distressed about his mother's refusal. After a few months Ari wondered if he was allowed to secretly take his parents' glass and metal dishes and tovel them without them knowing. If he would do it while they were away they would never know and then never be the wiser. He would also be doing them a huge favor by sanctifying their vessels and preventing his parents from continuing to violate this prohibition. His first question was whether he was allowed to tovel the dishes without their knowledge. His rationale was that what they didn't know wouldn't hurt them.

Eventually Ari decided that he was going to secretly tovel them. He brought a bunch of his parents dishes to the mikvah and unfortunately one of the glasses broke. It was a glass that wasn't used too often and Ari knew that if he would not tell his parents they probably wouldn't be the wiser. Ari wanted to know if he had to tell his parents that something broke or perhaps if they didn't know he didn't have to offer to share this information with them.

Finally Ari wanted to know if he had an obligation to pay for the broken dish.

So in summary there are three questions. One, is he allowed to tovel everything without their knowledge or consent? Two, if he breaks something does he have to tell them, and three, does he have an obligation to pay his parents for the broken glass?

What do you think?

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when one embarrasses another, even after paying the monetary fine he has not rectified his injustice until he expresses his apology to the one he hurt. The reason for this is because when one embarrasses another he has actually diminished the other's dignity. The only way to restore that diminished dignity is by personally asking forgiveness.

If the perpetrator feels remorse for what he did and commits himself not to hurt his friend again, but never expresses his apology in person to his friend, he has accomplished nothing. The act of submission to which one subjects themselves when apologizing is what restores the lost dignity.

Perhaps the reason we must express our apology in person directly to HaShem is because by transgressing His mitzvah we have diminished His dignity. If we wish to do proper teshuvah it must be expressed directly to HaShem and not to ourselves.

The problem is that the parallel is not accurate. My friend's dignity is diminished by my action and I must therefore restore it. However, HaShem's dignity is not diminished in the slightest by anything I do. If a fly lands on my nose is my dignity diminished? Even if it were, our actions are less significant than the fly's, relative to HaShem. So, our original question returns; what is the purpose of doing teshuvah in front of HaShem.

It is true, the parallel of HaShem to Man is not accurate vis-a-vis HaShem. However, from Man's perspective it is a perfect parallel. When I recite a bracha without paying attention to my words, HaShem's dignity has not been diminished whatsoever. However, in my eyes and from my perspective I have downgraded His dignity. He has lost nothing. I am the one who lost. I lost HaShem's dignity. In my eyes and from my actions it is evident that HaShem's dignity has fallen. The reason I must apologize in person to HaShem is to restore HaShem's dignity in my eyes. When the dignity of my beloved becomes tarnished, our relationship tarnishes as well. If I do not apologize in person to Him then my relationship with HaShem has diminished.

Torah and mitzvos purify Man only through the relationship that is built through them. If Man falls from his Torah and mitzvos and does teshuvah to restore his relationship it must be directed towards HaShem. Only then can he restore the dignity of HaShem that has diminished in his eyes.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos Shuva. Have an easy fast on Yom Kippur.



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### VOLCANIC LIGHTNING

We are all familiar with lightning that comes from the sky. But have you ever seen lightning that comes up from the ground?

Volcanic lightning is a spectacular but rare phenomenon which comes after a volcano erupts. It is a naturally occurring phenomenon that has been witnessed and documented in nearly 200 eruptions throughout history, most notably when Mount Vesuvius erupted in the year 79 CE. Pliny the Younger, described the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE, "There was a most intense darkness rendered more appalling by the fitful gleam of torches at intervals obscured by the transient blaze of lightning." The first studies of volcanic lightning were also conducted at Mount Vesuvius by Professor Palmieri who observed the eruptions of 1858, 1861, 1868, and 1872 from the Vesuvius Observatory. These eruptions often included lightning activity. The most recent well known images of volcanic lightning occurred at Eyjafjallajökull, in Iceland, in 2010.

How can a volcano create lightning? Why is volcanic lightning often contained within or in close proximity to the ash plume? What types of eruptions are most conducive for the creation of volcanic lightning? These are all good questions, and in order to answer them we must first look at the physics that makes it all possible.

In order for lightning to form there is one key component; a large charge separation between two masses. If the charge separation becomes big enough it is then able to overpower the air resistance, create a path of ionized air, and conduct electricity in the form of lightning.

You don't need an actual volcano to get an idea of how volcanic lightning works. Friction creates charged particles, like when you rub a balloon across your hair or your socks across a carpet. You're covering the balloon or yourself with negative particles. This imbalance of electrons is

called static electricity.

Eventually, you come into contact with something—another person or a metal doorknob, for instance—that is not electrically charged. The static "shock" you receive is the lightning-fast discharge of electrons.

The ash that is to be erupted begins as electrostatically neutral rock or rock fragments. Heat and movement within the volcano is thought to be the first source of particle charging, although the main process by which ash particles acquire a charge is friction. When an object, in this case, ash, with a neutral charge comes in contact with another object with different electrostatic qualities, electrons can potentially flow and one of the objects can become charged relative to the other.

The lightning itself may come in many shapes and forms including St. Elmo's fire(ball lightning), bolt lightning, sheet lightning, or a combination as was the case during the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in 1980 when several people witnessed long lasting shows of sheet lightning which was accompanied by Volkswagen sized St. Elmo's fire bouncing and rolling on the ground nearly 25 miles from the volcano.

In addition to the loud roar of the actual volcanic eruptions, the lightning streaks that spring from volcanic plumes create loud claps of thunder too. Until 2016 it was hard for scientists to differentiate between the sounds of the volcano erupting and the thunder. In December 2016, the Bogoslof volcano in Alaska's Aleutian Islands began to rumble and scientists from the US Geological Survey were prepared with microphones positioned on a nearby island. They caught the sounds, which lasted eight months. When they listened to the recordings they were able to hear loud claps of thunder, caused by the volcanic lightning.

Sources: [volcano.oregonstate.edu](http://volcano.oregonstate.edu) & [nationalgeographic.org](http://nationalgeographic.org)

## JUST REMEMBER, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE DON'T LOOK TOO GREAT EITHER

When Rabbi Yerachmiel Thav, today a beloved Rebbi at Yeshivas Kochav Yitzchok in Baltimore, looks back at his teenage years as a talmid at the Yeshiva of Philadelphia, he is eternally grateful for the wealth of Torah knowledge that he gained from his Rabbeim there. Equally important were the lessons he learned from them just by watching how they conducted themselves both inside and outside the classroom. Although thirty-seven years have passed since R' Yerachmiel left the Yeshiva of Philadelphia, he vividly recalls the following story. There was an indigent man in the Philadelphia area who spent his days traveling from city to city begging for money and food, and spent his nights in shelters for the homeless. He was unkempt and dirty; his clothes were tattered and torn. Every week, this vagrant would show up in the Yeshiva of Philadelphia to ask the boys for charity. Since he never told them his name, the boys nicknamed him "Ploni" — "Someone." The one thing the boys figured out very quickly was that Ploni had a horrible odor. Fearful of lice or other unknown critters that might jump off his body, the boys kept their distance when dropping change in Ploni's outstretched hands. One day, several boys, including R' Yerachmiel, were talking to their Rebbi, Rav Mendel Kaplan, zt"l, when Ploni walked into the room. The boys instinctively reached into their pockets to get some change to give Ploni while they discreetly moved away from his stench. The boys looked towards Rav Mendel, a new Rebbi who had never met Ploni before, to see what his reaction would be. With a friendly smile, Rav Mendel walked over to Ploni, wrapped his arms around him, and embraced him warmly. The boys watched in disbelief. The next day in class, one boy mustered enough courage to ask Rav Mendel, "How could you inhale Ploni's terrible smell and still hug him?" Rav Mendel answered, "Just remember, there are times when we, Klal Yisrael, don't look too great either, yet HaShem looks down at us and still gives us a big hug." He continued, "You know, sometimes a person is put into this world to go through suffering. He may be given this suffering not necessarily for himself, but for others, maybe even us." The boys realized that Rav Mendel understood and loved each person just for being who he was. Rav Mendel appreciated every human being regardless of his surface appearance. Whenever Ploni appeared in the Yeshiva of Philadelphia, Rav Mendel continued to greet him with the same warm hug. The boys noticed that Ploni seemed to want and need that hug even more than their money. In his pure and exemplary manner, Rav Mendel taught his students an unforgettable and monumental lesson in human compassion. (From For Goodness' Sake By Rabbi Baruch Brull, Published By Feldheim. Reprinted With Permission From The Copyright Holders)



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the lotto, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the clerk is not obligated to pay anything. This is because if the buyer was supposed to win, he would win with the changed number.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of my chaver muvhak  
**Reb Yehudah Munk Hacohen z"l.**

He lived his life b'simchas hachaim. His chesed to everyone was unparalleled. He will never be replaced.  
May he be a meilitz yosher for klal yisroel in these troubled times. Chazak Ubaruch  
Dr. Fishel Strenger

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