

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



I DESPERATELY NEED A CAST

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion we have the story of the angels telling how Sarah will soon have a child. The Torah says that Sarah laughed at herself saying, "How could I have children but my husband is so old". Later when HaShem related this to Avraham, He said, "Sarah said how can I have children but I am too old". Our Sages point out that HaShem changed the truth a bit in order to preserve the peace between Avraham and Sarah. This story establishes the Torah principle that one is allowed to change the truth for the sake of peace.

But what are the parameters of this principle? When is one allowed to change the truth for the sake of peace? This leads us to the following true story.

One day Dr. Avi, a doctor from an urgent care clinic, called Rav Zilberstein with the following dilemma. Chaim, a friend of Avi, came into the clinic and told the doctor that he hurt his arm and thought he might have broken it. The staff did an x-ray and saw that it was not broken.

Chaim then turned to his friend, "Listen, you may be right that it's not broken, but please give me a cast anyway. I will pay for all of the expenses. It's really important and it may prevent me from losing my mar-



NEVER ALONE

In this week's Parsha, Vayeira, we find our father Avraham praying to HaShem to reconsider His decision to destroy Sodom. Let us contemplate this request and discover how incredulous it was that Avraham should want Sodom to continue their existence.

The Mishna in Avos teaches us that Sodom's State policy was "what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours" The implication of this policy was that each man is on his own. Let no man turn to his neighbor for help and certainly do not offer help to your neighbor.

The Maharal teaches us that the function of the mitzvah of tzedakah and the mitzvah of lending money to our brother in his time of need is to engender unity among our nation. Unity is a critical component that HaShem wants for Mankind to have, as follows.

HaShem created many elephants, many zebras and many of each species but He created only one Man. The reason for this was that Man was to represent HaShem in this world. Just as He is only the singular Being in the Universe, Man too, is to be the singular being in the material world. However, how can this be maintained once there are many people? This can only be achieved if Mankind forms a single unit. If every person is for himself and there is no inter-connection with each other then the purpose of Man is defeated. HaShem, therefore, created Man with many needs and expected every person to assist his neighbor thereby creating a large unified organism, called Mankind, in which every person is a component that supports the other. Just as the human body has many components but together they form a single unit as each part plays its unique role, so too, Mankind is meant to be a single unit in which each person plays their unique role. When Mankind operates in such unison then Man is the singular being in the material world even when there are ten million people.

riage.” Chaim then told the following story:

Chaim was married and had a good relationship with his wife. However, he started staying late at work schmoozing with his friends about the news and politics. His wife asked him to please come home for dinner on time so that he could help her with the kids. Chaim promised to come on time, but the allure of schmoozing with his buddies after work was too strong.

One day, after coming home late, he got into a huge argument with his wife. Chaim realized that he would not be able to continue with his relationship like this. He promised his wife that he would shape up and be home on time. The next week he had a great streak. He was home on time four days in a row.

But on Thursday, as he was walking out of work, he started talking to his colleagues. One thing led to another and before he realized it, he was an hour late.

Chaim knew that if he came home late without a good justification it would cause very serious damage, perhaps permanent damage, to his marriage.

On his way home he had an idea. His arm was hurting, so he stopped at the urgent care clinic to get it checked.

After Avi told him it was not broken, Chaim begged, “I need to tell my wife that I came home late because of an emergency and I needed a cast. If I don’t have the cast there is a good chance my marriage will be lost. I will pay for all of the costs. Please give me a cast anyway, even if there is technically not a break.”

“But that would be dishonest”, Avi argued. “You are right”, Chaim replied, “but the Torah says you are allowed to lie for the sake of shalom bayis.”

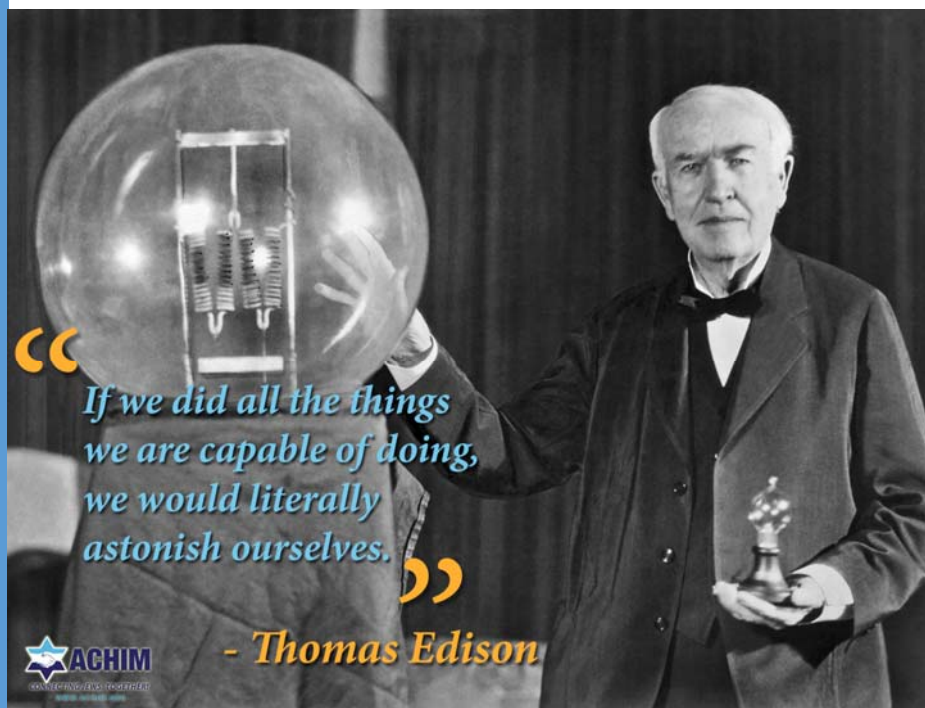
Avi was very torn about whether he should give Chaim the cast. He picked up the phone and called Rav Zilberstein with this question.

What do you think?

Can Dr. Avi give Chaim the cast if Chaim doesn’t medically need it, and he would be facilitating the dishonesty? Or would we say that this is an example of lying for the sake of shalom bayis?

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MITZVA MEME



Avraham understood this lesson and dedicated his life to teaching it to the world by doing chessed to others. In doing so, he did much more than teach his generation the importance of chessed; he actually created this interweave between people thereby uniting them with the chessed he practiced and in turn with the chessed they practiced.

The policy of Sodom for which HaShem was judging them was in direct conflict with Avraham’s teaching. Sodom taught that nobody should help his neighbor. The downfall of Sodom on these grounds would promote Avraham’s cause, or actually HaShem’s cause. The world would be a better place and a more unified place with the demise of Sodom. How is it that Avraham should come to Sodom’s defense? Did he really want Sodom to continue on their path?

Perhaps Avraham recognized the opportunity to turn the entire Sodom fiasco into the greatest demonstration of uniting the world. Sodom was on the cusp of total destruction because they denied the need for each

person to support his neighbor; because they believed that every man was on his own and nobody should support the other. If as a result of his interceding with HaShem on their behalf they would be spared destruction, Sodom would be beholden to Avraham as the one who saved them from destruction. Their very existence would be evidence to their dependence on others and to the importance that no man can do it on his own.

One might argue that Sodom would not acknowledge their gratitude to Avraham. While that may be true, nevertheless, the One Who decided the fate of Sodom would make it known that their judgement was reversed because of Avraham’s interceding. Even if Sodom would continue in their evil ways, their very existence would be the loudest proclamation against their policy. Avraham’s message would find its greatest expression through them being spared.

As the world seems to be spinning out of control, we know nothing is out of control. We pray that the day will soon come when all of Mankind will recognize the Controller and He will be One and we will be One.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



Pictured: Counterclockwise from top right, Columns of salt protruding out of the dead sea and underneath the dead sea

SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

SODOM & THE DEAD SEA

This week's Parsha talks about the destruction of Sodom. The Dead Sea now covers the area of Sodom. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, archaeological evidence indicates that as late as 2000–1500 BCE the area of Sodom adjacent to the Dead Sea was once very fertile, with fresh water flowing into the Dead Sea in sufficient amounts to sustain agriculture.

But today, it is of course different. The Dead Sea is called an endorheic, hypersaline lake. Endorheic means that it is a body of water that does not flow into the sea. A hypersaline lake is a landlocked body of water that contains significant concentrations of sodium chloride or other salts, with saline levels surpassing that of ocean water. The Dead Sea's surface and shores are 1,412 ft below sea level, making Sodom the lowest place in the world. It is 997 ft deep, the deepest hypersaline lake in the world. With a salinity of 34.2% in 2011, it is one of the world's saltiest bodies of water, 9.6 times as salty as the ocean. The truth is that the Dead Sea is actually not a sea, but a salt water lake.

Salinity increases in the sea's deeper waters; at depths below 300 feet, the water becomes so concentrated with salt that it can hold no more, and the salt builds up on the seafloor. The Dead Sea's unusually high salt concentration means that people can easily float in it due to natural buoyancy. It's estimated that in the whole of the Dead Sea there is about 37 billion tonnes of salt.

The Dead Sea is named that because animals and plants cannot live there due to the harsh environment. The salinity is high enough to kill any fish that accidentally make their way into the Dead Sea. However it is not entirely dead. Algae and some salt-loving bacteria thrive there.

Today, the Dead Sea is mostly replenished by freshwater from the Jordan River flowing in from the north and by a few small nearby springs. Like we said before, nothing flows out. Without any outlets, when freshwater reaches the sea, it has nowhere else to go. In the arid low-lying desert, the water that collects in the Dead Sea evaporates more quickly than water in the open ocean, leaving vast quantities of salt behind. This explains why it is so salty.

The Dead Sea is receding at a swift rate; its surface area today is 234 square miles, as opposed to 410 square miles in 1930. The recession of the Dead Sea has begun causing problems and multiple canal and pipeline proposals have been made to reduce its recession. The Dead Sea's main, northern basin is 31 miles long and 9 miles wide at its widest point. It lies in a fault valley that covers more than 620 miles, beginning at the Sinai Peninsula's tip and extending northward to Turkey. It is thought that a series of lakes once occupied this valley.

Dead Sea salt is said to have many health benefits, as it is full of minerals which are absorbed by soaking, stimulating blood circulation and relieving skin disorders, among other things. The Dead Sea has attracted visitors from around the Mediterranean Basin for thousands of years. It was one of the world's first health resorts in the time of Herod and it has been the supplier of a wide variety of products. Interestingly, the Ancient Egyptians used asphalt from the Dead Sea in the embalming process that created mummies. Today, tourists visit the Sea on its Israeli, Jordanian and West Bank coastlines.

YOU ARE NOT A BUS DRIVER; YOU ARE DRIVING AN ARON KODESH

Berel Lazerson was a school bus driver for many years in Eretz Yisrael. After driving for years and getting older, he became frustrated with the job. The boys on the bus were rowdy and it exhausted him.

Berel decided that he was going to quit. He told the principal of the school that he was going to switch to become a delivery man instead.

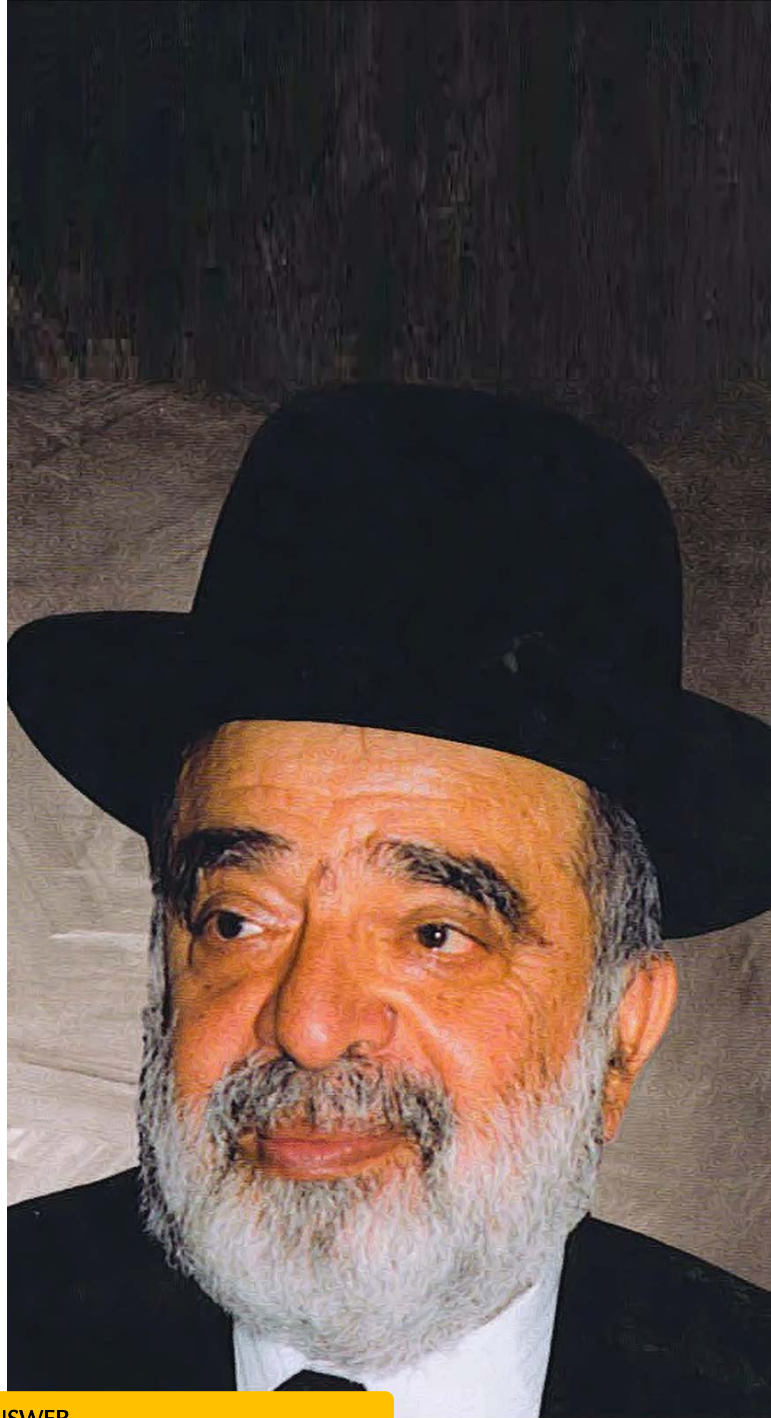
The principal, Rabbi Ben Shalom said, "Okay you can stop, but would it be okay if you speak with my Rebbi, Rabbi Bentzion Abba Shaul before you make your final decision?"

Berel met with Rav Abba Shaul. Rabbi Abba Shaul listened to Berel's story. Rav Bentzion smiled and said, "You should realize that you are not a bus driver. You are driving an aron kodesh. The boys are not boys, they are sifrei Torah. Inside each child is the entire future of the Jewish people and its Torah. Every time you open the door you are not just opening a bus door. You are being mechubad with pesichas ha'aron, opening the aron kodesh. Do you want to give up this kibud?"

Berel was so inspired by Rav Bentzion's words that he agreed to continue with his job.

The next day, as he opened the school bus door, he told the boys, "Thank you for the zechus and kibud of being able to drive you every day".

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about whether to wake up the teens for Kiddush, Rav Zilberstein answered that they should be woken up to do the mitzvah of kidush. We don't know for sure that they will break the Shabbos, and it's possible that the power of this mitzvah may inspire them to keep Shabbos completely.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to
The memory of Eta Sarah (Shirley) Steger on her first Yahrzeit the 19th of Cheshvan
by The Steger Family

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