



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



DO I CALL?

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion we have the story of how the brothers initially planned to kill Yosef. Reuven, however, saved Yosef from his brothers and told them to put him into a pit, planning to rescue him shortly thereafter. Reuven did the mitzvah of saving another Jew's life. This is called *hatzalas nefashos* which leads us to the following story.

Mordechai was in his mid 60's. One day he had severe pains in his chest and his shoulders. His wife called Hatzalah and they rushed him to the hospital. It turned out that it was nothing serious, just very severe gas pain.

The next week the same thing happened.



LIGHTING UP THE DARKNESS

Every holiday on our calendar is dedicated to an event that marks a change in the development of our people. Pesach marks the birth of our people, Shavuot marks the receiving of our mission and so on. What change does Chanukah mark?

With the advent of the rebuilding of the Temple by Ezra a new epoch began. With the beginning of this period there was no more prophecy. HaShem's 'normal' way of communicating with us ceased. There was no longer a monarch who ruled with the authority of a king. We were plunged into a period of intense darkness, a period where guidance and direction seemed to have left us. HaShem receded behind the curtain of nature and history, our kings had left us. We were going to be spreading out across the globe with no one directing us. How were we to move on? To whom would we turn to for guidance? How would we traverse the world and travel through thousands of years of history?

Today, as we look back with the advantage of hindsight, we see that it was the Torah and those who gave their lives to study it that gave us direction and held us together. What is the secret of our Torah? How does it transcend all barriers to deliver such universal guidance to all who study her? How can her wisdom address the needs of the Jews in the Arabic lands as well as guiding the Jews in the Christian lands? How can her wisdom address the challenges that faced the Jews during the Crusades as well as the Jews of modern day America? The answer lies in the hidden light, the *Ohr Haganuz*, which lies tucked away in the recesses of the Torah.

When HaShem created light on the first day of Creation it was different from the light we have today. It was a light by which Man could see throughout the entire world. There was nothing hidden from him. There were no barriers of space or matter. It was

He had severe pains in his chest and his shoulders. His wife called Hatzalah and they rushed him to the hospital and again it was a false alarm. This happened five weeks in a row. Every time he was rushed to the hospital and it was nothing serious.

The hospital visits were emotionally traumatic and were also quite expensive.

One Shabbos, Mordechai was feeling bad. He was having severe pains in his chest and his shoulders again.

This was now the sixth time in a row that this happened. Mordechai's wife wasn't sure if she should call Hatzalah, as this time it was on a Shabbos. Hatzala was called five times already and it turned out that it was nothing.

She finally decided to call Hatzalah. The dispatcher wasn't sure if he should make the Hatzalah members break Shabbos. They rushed to this very person already five times and there was never a problem.

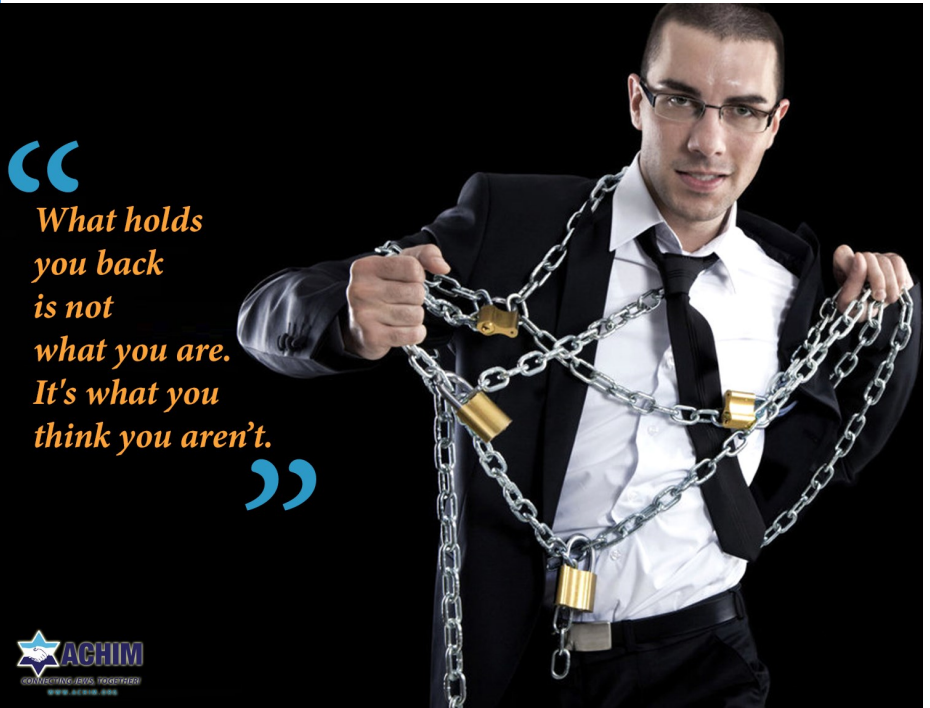
What do you think should be done in such a case? Should the wife call hatzalah on Shabbos? Should Hatzala violate Shabbos in such a case?

See Chashukei Chemed Megillah Page 187

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*What holds
you back
is not
what you are.
It's what you
think you aren't.*

”



a light which provided absolute clarity. Because of its intense holiness HaShem placed it in hiding to be used for a later time when there would be no evil. Our Sages state “Where did Ha-Shem hide this great light? He hid it in the Torah. Therefore, the insight one gets from studying the Torah is a reflection from that great light.” It is no wonder that as long as we carried our Torah with us from place to place and studied it and taught it to the next generation we would always have access to this hidden light. With this clarity always accessible we can appreciate how we survived and thrived throughout the exile.

In addition to the hidden light being tucked away in the Torah there was another way of accessing the hidden light. That was through the lighting of the menorah.

The Malbim explains that the spiritual energy that was drawn down from Heaven in the Bais Hamikdosh had to be initiated by the actions of Man. So, for example, although a fire came down

from Heaven to burn the offerings it had to be preceded by a kohein bringing a natural fire from below. Once the kohein did his job it was met by a Heavenly fire from Above. The Malbim applies this principle to the menorah as well. He explains that when Aharon lit the menorah down below, that created the possibility for the hidden light to come down to us from Above.

As we consider the story of Chanukah, we see a remarkable demonstration of our people's tenacity to fight for the Torah. Against all odds, a small number of Jews stood up the greatest military power for the sole purpose to be able to study and observe the Torah. It was a war that took many years and took even more lives. Nevertheless, we vanquished the enemy. As a prize trophy for this valiant fight, HaShem performed the miracle of the menorah, thereby telling us that even in the darkest times we have the menorah and her lights. No matter where we find ourselves we can do our part of lighting our nights with Torah study and HaShem will respond in kind by sending us insight that reflects the hidden light.

Chanukah marks is the immortal connection we have with the Torah and the guidance she offers to all who study her. This is why Chanukah is so relevant to us today as it was in every period of our dark exile.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos and an enlightening Chanukah.



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

A BIG RODENT WITH A BIG APPETITE

Two and a half weeks ago, Klal Yisrael began maseches Pesachim. In the beginning of this masechta, we learned about a rodent (a chulda – possibly a rat or a weasel) that creates all kinds of halachic problems for us by potentially dragging significant amounts of chametz from one domain to another.

This week in Table Talk, we will learn about another kind of creature living in this world – a semi-aquatic rodent that does not eat chametz, but that does have a huge appetite which can cause real damage to their local ecosystems and create many problems for those living near them.

Nutria (Myocastor coypus, also known as coypu or swamp rats), are very big rodents that live in areas with lots of freshwater. These rodents can grow up to 24 inches long from head to rump, and their rounded tail can add yet another 12 inches to its overall length (that's 3 feet in total length)! Thus, nutria are about the size of a raccoon, but look more like a cross between a giant rat and a small beaver. A full-grown adult can weigh over 25 pounds.

Swamp rats have very large **orange** front teeth – these teeth are quite noticeable since they are not contained within the skin folds of its mouth and therefore are always on full display! Iron pigment in the enamel of their teeth gives their teeth this startling color, as well as making these food-cutting prongs both firm and durable. As we shall see, these rodents put their unusual incisors to very good use.

Besides their strange dental armature, coypu also have webbed hind-feet; they are strong swimmers and can remain submerged for as long as five minutes. They live either in burrows or in nests, which are never far from a river, lake or canal; they are always close to a freshwater source. They are more agile in the water than they are on land.

Nutria are native to South America, but they were imported to the United States in the early 1900's by the fur industry. The nutria's brown/grey outer hair looks shaggy and unappealing – but this drab outercoat is a cover for a thick, soft and furry undercoat. It was this fine fur that made the coypu a valuable commodity; fur farms were set up in many countries, including Canada and the USA. Unfortunately, many of the rodents escaped (or were released) and the coypu quickly established their own wild populations; having a very high reproductive rate, the swamp rat population exploded!

The big problem with these rodents is that they are voracious eaters: nutria will eat about 25% of their body weight in plants (leaves, stems, roots and all) every day, wreaking havoc on the native ecosystem. Because the animals eat the entire plant, the vegetation is less likely to grow back, and the removal of the root systems destabilizes the entire water-based bionetwork. Coypu burrows damage river banks while their unchecked feeding leads to the destruction of large areas of swampland. Habitat destruction caused by coypu threatens rare marshland species of birds, fish and invertebrates. Nutria are on the list of the "100 World's Worst" animal invaders by an international conservation group. Nutria are not picky eaters: they can destroy commercial crops as well as backyard gardens – they are equal opportunity pests!

Do nutria make good pets? Perhaps if raised from very young. But, unlike other rodent pets (i.e. mice or rats) they won't fit in your pocket, and you will need a very large cage to hold them ... with lots and lots of water for them to swim around in! But, at least they will not bring chametz into your house ☺.

Mah rabu ma'a'se'cha Hashem, kulam b'chachma a'see'sa!

מה רבו מעשיך ה' כולם בחכמה עשית...

“HASHEM IS BIG. HE CAN PAY FOR WHATEVER”

Rebetzin Henny Machlis was renowned for her extreme hospitality, generosity and kindness.

Rebetzin's Henny's mechutan once related the following beautiful incident. When Yaakov and Leah became engaged, the four parents went out to have the conversation about who would pay for what. We agreed to pay for half of the wedding. It was a short engagement of just five weeks. A couple of weeks in, I realized that the wedding hall they were looking at was huge, and our half its cost would be way beyond our budget. I called Henny and told her that our concept of a “normal” size wedding was different from theirs. I did not know what to do, because I didn't want to cause any problem in the shalom between us. I asked, “Why do we need such a big hall?”

Henny replied, “We really need to invite a lot of people.” I knew that they do amazing hachnassas orchim, but I did not realize that they extend it to every aspect of their lives. So I said, “Well, the last couple weddings we made we had a total of 300-400 people, and that's what I was expecting. What are you expecting?” Henny said, “We have to be prepared for the possibility that there will be closer to 1,000.” I really wasn't sure what to do. We couldn't afford to pay for 500 people. I asked, “Would you be comfortable if I asked a Rav what to do?” Henny was completely agreeable. She said that whatever the Rav says, they'll be fine with that.

The Rav said that whatever is the normal amount that we'd invite is what we are obligated to pay for. I called Henny back and told her. She said, “I'm 100 percent okay with that.” She asked how much that would be. I told her that we'd pay for the 200 guests that we'd invite. She said, “That will help so much.” Instead of making me feel that I wasn't holding up my end of the bargain, she thanked me for whatever I was giving to help pay for the wedding.

A week and a half before the wedding, Henny called me. She said, “I was thinking about the wedding, and we're going to invite a lot of people. And after the wedding, through the grapevine, everyone you know will hear that your son got married and that there were 1,000 people at the wedding. And I don't want you to be walking down the street and see someone you know and feel bad that they weren't invited to the wedding when they know there were 1,000 people there. So I just want you to know that Mordechai and I feel very strongly that anybody and everybody you would want to invite, you should invite, and don't worry about the numbers or the money. You pay for 200, and we'll pay for the rest.” I was dumbfounded. I asked, “Are you sure you want to take that on?” Henny replied, “Hashem is big. He can pay for whatever.”

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question of the chocolate, Rav Zilberstein answered that the prankster Yoel has to pay the victim Baruch for causing him to buy the chocolate. However Baruch still has to pay for some of it because he benefited from the chocolate. Baruch who benefited should pay for one third of the chocolate, and Yoel should pay two thirds. See Veharev Na Volume One Page 228

This week's issue of TableTalk is dedicated in honor of our dear friends
Isaak and Carolyn Bakaev and their family.
Yakov and Juliya Bashyrov

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