

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE KIDNEY MIRACLE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion we have the story of the incredible hashgacha pratis, divine providence, that brought Yosef to power in Egypt, and that brought Yosef face to face with his brothers once again. This story of hashgacha pratis leads us to the following fascinating story of hashgacha pratis that was told over by Rav Zilberstein.

Rachel had a daughter who was in desperate need of a kidney donation. Rachel got tested and was told that her kidney would be a good match for her daughter. Rachel agreed to pay the enormous medical fees involved with removing her kidney and transferring it to her daughter.

Unfortunately the surgical team made an error and took out the kidney from the wrong side. This is known as a "wrong site surgery" and it happens occasionally.

The kidney that was removed was not a good match for Rachel's daughter.



THE SAFETY LINE

This week's Parsha, Vayigash, opens at the climax of the drama playing out between Yosef and Yehudah. In last week's Parsha Benyomin was implicated in stealing Yosef's goblet for which Yosef committed Benyomin to be his slave. The Parsha ended in the middle of a dialogue between Yehudah and Yosef in which Yehudah offered to serve as a slave instead of Benyomin and to allow Benyomin to go home to his father. Yosef, however, would not budge. He insisted that Benyomin serve as his slave and Yehudah return home. Our Parsha begins with the continuation of that dialogue as Yehudah tries to shake Yosef's decision. The Torah's opening verse states "And Yehudah approached him..." We must ask, Yehudah was already standing before Yosef and was already engaged in speaking with him, what is the intent of this additional "approach"?

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh suggests that Yehudah realized at this point that the only way to change this officer's decision was to come close to him. Not the physical closeness as in closer proximity, but to an emotional closeness. As difficult as it was for Yehudah to draw himself close to this Egyptian idol worshiper, he forced himself to open up and draw himself close on an emotional level to him. This strategy is based on the principle that if you can draw yourself close to another person you will be able to reach that person on a deeper level and bring them closer to seeing your position.

Perhaps this was the reason why Yosef could no longer hide the fact that he was Yosef. Yehudah had touched Yosef so deeply that he drew the brotherhood out from Yosef. Perhaps this is the intent of the verse in last week's Parsha "and Yosef recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him". The pain that one experiences when they are not recognized by their brothers covers over the brotherhood. Now that Yehudah reached out to Yosef, albeit in an attempt to sway his decision, Yosef felt the recognition and the brotherhood flowed forth. He was no longer able to hold back from his brothers.

MITZVA MEME

Rachel was of course extremely upset and after the surgery she began proceedings to sue the surgeon for malpractice and restitution. She also refused to pay the doctor, Dr. Weiskoff, for the expensive procedure. She felt that the procedure was a total waste and a disaster.

But this story has a fascinating ending. Tests were done on the mistakenly removed kidney and it turned out that it was highly cancerous. Had the doctors removed the correct kidney, Rachel would have lost both kidneys, the one that was removed and the one that was cancerous. Now she only lost the kidney that was cancerous and her life was clearly saved by the doctor's mistake. It was apparently clear divine providence that caused the doctor's mistake that saved her life.

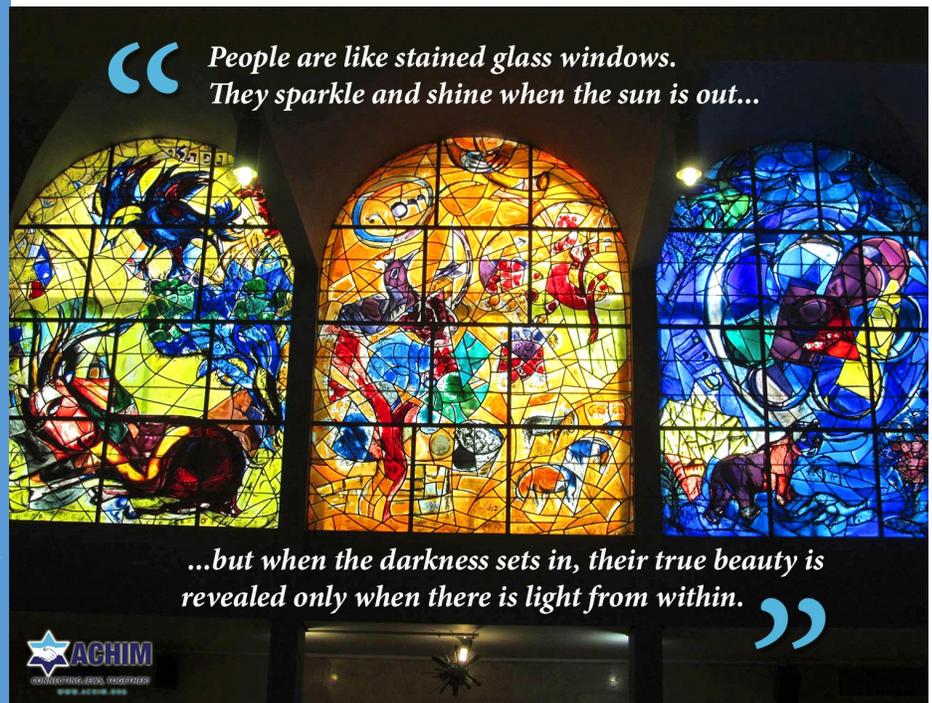
After this story was revealed, Dr. Weiskoff asked Rachel to drop her malpractice and restitution lawsuit. In addition he asked her to pay for the procedure because it turned out that the procedure was essential and it saved her life.

Rachel however argued that even though he saved her life, she never asked him to remove that kidney so she refused to pay him for the procedure. In addition he damaged her without her consent so he was liable for malpractice.

However Dr. Weiskoff argued that she should pay him for saving her, and he never actually damaged her, he saved her.

Who is right? If the doctor did a procedure that unwittingly saved her life is she obligated to pay him for it? Does she have to drop her suit?

See Hebrew Veharev Na Volume One page 321



There are many Jews who feel foreign to their own people in spite of their awareness that they are Jewish. The reason for this is that they have never had the opportunity to meet their people. There are often misconceptions about what we are all about. They have simply not recognized their Jewishness. However, once they encounter someone who recognizes their Jewishness and draws themselves near to them, a flame of awareness flares up. This flame can express itself in the most beautiful ways.

This is exactly what happened just a few weeks ago when I received a call from a young woman, Jennifer, from Manhattan. Jennifer and Josh are a fine Jewish couple who have two beautiful children and have nothing at all to do with the Jewish community. Jennifer's 97 year old grandmother, Blanche, a Holocaust survivor, fell ill and lost the part of her memory that knows English. Her aides, who did not know Yiddish or Russian were suddenly helpless. Naturally, Jennifer panicked; who was going to care for Grandma? When an acquaintance of Jennifer who is a member of the Jewish commu-

nity heard her dilemma she immediately made a few calls which led her to Rabbi Gavriel Horan who heads the RAJE program here in Baltimore. He, in turn, suggested that Jennifer call me since I work with the Russian speaking Jewish community. In a matter of these several phone calls Jennifer was being helped by Alex Berezin who runs a home care service with Russian speaking caregivers and Grandma was in good hands. I also had a chance to visit Blanche. Jennifer was overwhelmed by the outpouring of help and concern shown to her by her own people, none of whom she knew outside of the first contact.

I received a text from Jennifer accompanied with a picture of her Shabbat table with challah and candles on it. "Thanks to all you wonderful people. I will do my first Shabbat ever with my two little kids tonight. Thanks to you and to all the wonderful people (who I never met) who helped Grandma for reminding me it is wonderful to be part of a Jewish community. Shabbat Shalom" How fortunate we are! No matter how far the distance between us and our people is, there is always a safety line available to draw ourselves back in. We need only to show others where that line is.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE FLAMINGO

Have you ever heard the expression “strange bird” used to describe an unusual person, especially an individual with an idiosyncratic personality or peculiar behavioral characteristics; that is to say, someone who is a bit strange in their habits or their mannerisms or their appearance? Where did this expression come from? Some say that it was first used in reference to Horace’s peacock, named by the same at the turn of the 17th century; he called it a “rara avis”.

However, there is another bird which we’ve seen in zoos that is at least as strange as the mysterious peacock: This bird is pink and red (or orange) in color. It is tall and skinny – adults being 3 to 5 feet tall, but weighing in at only 7 to 8 pounds (that’s the size of a newborn baby)! Their legs are like long sturdy sticks which can measure up to 2 feet in length, while their small heads rest upon very long and slender S-shaped necks. Their eyes are small and beady and are yellow/green in color ... quite a contrast to the pinks and reds of their body color! Their downturned bills are as large as their heads and they look as though somebody made a mistake and put on their bills wrong side up! These birds wade through their watery habitat all day long, and then eat with their heads hanging upside down in the water,! Their wings are huge, 3 to 5 feet in length, and when they fly (which can be over long distances), they look like a strange flying ‘X’ – wings stretched out in one direction, legs and neck stretched out straight in the other!

This is certainly one of the strangest birds in creation. Of course, it is the flamingo. Not only do flamingos look strange, but here are some interesting facts about flamingos as well:

- Flamingos embody the saying "you are what you eat." The pink and reddish colors of a flamingo's feathers come from beta-carotene in the crustaceans and plankton that they eat. Some flamingos are a brighter red color because of the beta-carotene availability in their food while the lesser flamingos are a paler pink due to ingesting smaller amounts of this pigment.

- Flamingo chicks are born with grey and white feathers; it takes about three years before their feathers turn pink and red. Although the chick’s beaks are straight, but they begin to curve as the chicks grow and mature. After hatching, both parents feed their chicks with a kind of crop “milk”, made in glands in their upper digestive tract and regurgitated into their mouths.

This nutritious extract is made up of fat, protein, and red-and-white blood cells.

- Flamingos usually stand on one leg, with the other being tucked beneath the body! Scientists theorize that standing on one leg helps them to conserve body heat (because they spend a lot of time with their legs in the water). Another theory is that it takes less energy to stand and balance on one leg.

- Flamingos “filter feed” by stirring up mud with their feet and then reaching down and scooping up a beakful of mud and water. The filtering of food items is assisted by hairy structures inside their beaks (“lamellae”) and also by their large, rough-surfaced tongue. This all happens as the flamingo’s head is upside-down!

- The name “flamingo” comes from Portuguese or Spanish flamenco, meaning “flame-colored”. There are six different species of flamingos, but it takes an expert to tell them apart. One species, the American Flamingo, is native to North America, but it is rarely seen in the United States anymore.

- The flamingo is the national bird of the Bahamas. Flamingos are very social and they live together in groups of thousands. The colony works together to protect each other from predators and to take care of the young.

- It is believed that flamingos are monogamous and remain mated for life. A pair of flamingos will search the mudflats for a good nesting spot, but it is the female that will make the final decision. The couple will build a nest together and will defend their nesting territory against usurpers. After hatching, both adults and chicks will stay inside the nesting sites. After one week, the chicks will begin to explore their immediate surroundings. At two weeks old, the chicks congregate in small groups called “microcrèches” and after that into large groups called “crèches”, now containing thousands of individuals!

- Flamingos can thrive in zoos, but their wings must be clipped or they will fly away. A pair of flamingos once escaped from a zoo in Kansas and was finally spotted in Texas 14 years later! The first flamingo was hatched in a Swiss zoo in 1958; since then, nearly 400 flamingos have hatched there and have gone on to other zoos around the world. The oldest known flamingo died in a zoo in Australia at 83 years old!

Mah rabu ma’a’s’e’cha Hashem, kulam b’chachma a’see’sa! - Ed. by Avraham Cohen

OUR WIVES ARE HERE AT THE CONVENTION WE SHOULD DO IT FOR THEM

Once Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky and Rav Shneur Kotler were at an Agudah convention.

Rav Yaakov and Rav Shneur were about to enter the main hall of the convention together. Rav Shneur started heading for a side entrance so that the crowd would not notice him coming in. He did not want everyone to notice and then stand up for him.

However Rav Yaakov, who was renowned for his humility, uncharacteristically insisted on entering through the main door.

Rav Yaakov then explained why it would be better to go through the main door rather than privately through the side.

"Our wives are here at the convention. We should do it for them", Rav Yaakov explained. "All year long they put up with the endless demands on our time. Now let them at least enjoy the honor we are shown when everyone rises for us."

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question of vaccine priorities, we brought this question to Rav Tzvi Berkowitz. The answer to this dilemma is complex and there are many factors to consider, but Rav Tzvi said that the general principles can be found in the Mishna in Horios.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated
in honor of Uri Cohn's Bar Mitzvah

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