

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



GIVING THE DOCTOR AN EXTRA 500

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha talks about the exodus from Mitzrayim and the splitting of the sea. Shortly after the splitting of the sea the Jewish people rested in a place called Marah. The Torah says, "There the law and justice was given to them". (Shemos 15,25). Our Sages teach that among the laws that were taught there was the mitzvah of keeping Shabbos.

This leads us to the following fascinating true story.

A religious Jew named Chaim, who lived in Israel, needed urgent medical treatment on Shabbos. There was a doctor who lived nearby who was an expert in that field. He was Jewish but not religious.

Chaim knocked on his door and told the doctor of his urgent need for treatment. The doctor said "I can help you but I need to be paid before I do the treatment". Chaim asked if he could pay right after Shabbos, but the doctor said that the only way he would perform the procedure was if



MEASURE YOUR FRIEND TO MEASURE YOURSELF

As we read the Parshios of the Torah we discover so many times that our people failed to live up to HaShem's expectations. It is noteworthy how true the Torah is to the real facts and does not sugarcoat our past. It is nevertheless disappointing to see so many failures. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand how could our people who experienced the Ten Plagues and the Splitting of the Red Sea and received the Torah at Sinai demonstrate such a lack of faith in HaShem?

The opening verse of our Parsha, B'shalach, reads "It happened when Pharaoh sent out the people ..." The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh asks why does the verse imply that it was Pharaoh who sent out the people, when we know it was HaShem Who sent them out. In his answer, the Ohr Hachaim introduces the Zohar which states that whenever the Torah refers to the Jewish people it uses the phrase "the Children of Israel " or some other specific name indicating the Jewish people. And when the Torah uses the phrase "the nation" it is a reference to the eruv rav, a large number of non-Jews, who were perhaps Egyptian or from some other nationality that tagged along with our people.

The Ohr Hachaim then explains the verse by telling us that it was Pharaoh who sent the eruv rav out with our people, it was not HaShem. Pharaoh wanted to sabotage the exodus and bring our people back to Egypt. HaShem took us out of Egypt and Pharaoh sent the eruv rav with us.

Chaim would pay upfront. Chaim knew that one is allowed to violate the Shabbos in the case of a medical emergency. He quickly went home and got his checkbook. He asked the doctor how much the fee was. "500 Shekels", the doctor answered.

Chaim opened his checkbook and wrote 1000 shekels. "Excuse me, I think you made a mistake. I said 500 not 1000", said the doctor. "Yes," answered Chaim. "But to write 500 hundred in hebrew is 7 letters (חמש מאות). To write 1000 in hebrew is just 3 letters (אלף). That is why I wrote 1000".

The doctor was quiet, and quite impressed. He proceeded to perform the medical procedure. Chaim was healed and went home happily.

Later that day, the doctor thought for a long time about what had transpired. This religious Jew was willing to spend 500 extra shekels in order to avoid writing 4 letters on Shabbos.

The doctor was so moved that he resolved to learn more about the significance of Shabbos.

Sure enough, after a while, the doctor became shomer Shabbos because of this story.

During the doctor's tshuva journey, he met with Rav Zilberstein. He told him the whole story outlined above and asked two questions.

First, was the doctor allowed to cash the check? On one hand, Chaim willingly gave him the 1000 shekel. But on the other hand Chaim didn't really want to spend that much money, he just didn't want to write unnecessarily on Shabbos.

The second question he asked was if Chaim's decision to write a 1000 shekels rather than 500 is what the halacha really requires one to do, or was Chaim being extra stringent? Does the halacha require one to spend more money in order to write less letters?

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“
*If you were totally
 unafraid of failure
 what goals would
 you set for
 yourself?*
 ”



After gaining this new insight, I opened my Chumash to review the many instances where our people failed in living up to HaShem's expectations and I was pleased to discover that most of them were in fact, instigated by the eruv rav! This includes the terrible sin of the Golden Calf which was instigated by the eruv rav not our people. In some of them there is no mention at all of the Jewish people. Unfortunately, the sin of the spies in which we rejected entering the Land of Israel, there is no mention at all of the eruv rav, we must carry that load ourselves.

It certainly lessens the question how we lacked faith in HaShem, because most of the time it was not us who demonstrated the lack of faith but the eruv rav.

The question is why does HaShem display such displeasure at our behavior in the desert? So many of those sins were started by

the eruv rav! Especially the sin of the 'misonanim' in B'haloscha, in which there is no mention at all of our people's participation, what did we do wrong?

It would seem that HaShem expected that we would influence the eruv rav rather than the eruv rav influencing us. Perhaps all those sins demonstrated how short we came up in carrying the lessons of emunah. While it may be correct that we did not fall that greatly, but if our emunah would have been in the right place the eruv rav themselves would have been elevated. In other words, the stronger one's emunah in HaShem is, the stronger his friend's emunah will be as well.

If we are correct in our understanding, the Torah is teaching us such a wonderful lesson; if you wish to measure your level of emunah see how the people around you relate to emunah issues.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

WATER, OUR BLUE PLANET'S ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

Our Sages teach that when the Sea of Reeds split – the entire world took notice. This is because not only did the Sea split down the middle into two parts, but ALL the water in the world also split into two parts – the water in your glass, the water in your bath, the water in your fish tank, and swimming pool.

That was awesome then. But the truth is that the physical and chemical laws that define how water behaves in our world today are just as awesome. We look at water every day and it may appear unremarkable because we are used to it. But if we look deeper we can appreciate some amazing things.

1) H₂O – a water molecule – is composed of 2 atoms of hydrogen (H) and 1 atom of oxygen (O). Hydrogen and Oxygen are invisible gasses... and yet they come together to form a tactile, sticky, liquid! We take it for granted, but think about it. That is magical and miraculous!

2) Partial “negative” charges (on the O atom) and partial “positive” charges (on the H atoms) cause H₂O molecules to snuggle up to one another in a unique phenomenon called “hydrogen-bonding”. This may sound like an arcane fact, but there are some astounding repercussions of this phenomenon that change life as we know it. Because of these positive and negative charges, water is ‘sticky’ and so we have water drops, streams, rivers, lakes & oceans - cohesive bodies of water. Without cohesive bodies of water, we might not be able to swim in a pool or go to a Mikvah.

3) Because of these positive and negative charges, objects float on water, even relatively big ones. Without this “surface tension”, everything would sink. Without hydrogen-bonding, we would never be able to travel an ocean in a boat.

4) Without water's ‘stickiness’, nothing would get ‘wet’. Everything would be like Teflon and water would slide right off it. Imagine never being able to get wet in the hot summer!

5) Hydrogen-bonding and surface tension also explain why water striders and other insects can “walk on water”; and why soap bubbles start out flat but form up into spheres. This is because of the attraction of water to itself.

6) The cohesion of water molecules is also essential for all plant life here on earth! The ‘stickiness’ of water causes it to enter into the roots from the soil, ‘crawl’ up the sides of tiny xylem tubules in plants (“capillary action”), and finally move into the leaves, where plants manufacture sugars. This is important to us because this is how all of our food is produced.

7) Water is the “universal solvent.” Because of its polarity (“+” and “-” charges) water can dissolve more substances than any other liquid. This keeps us alive. For example, being such a great solvent, water washing through our kidneys dissolves toxic substances and sends them on the way out of our bodies.

8) In addition, water is involved in just about everything our body does. It's a big part of the blood that brings nutrients to all our cells. It helps us regulate our body temperature. And it acts as a shock absorber for many organs, our brain, and spinal cord. This is why a person can live about a month without food, but only about a week without water.

9) The following is a well-known fact but it's important to appreciate. When all other liquids turn into solids, they sink to the bottom of the container. But not water: ice floats! This is very unusual and a very good thing for life on earth: Ice floating on top of a body of water lets the rest of it stay in liquid form. If ice sank, whole oceans could freeze solid and would make life underwater impossible. And, it's also ‘cool’ because ... our ice cubes float!

10) Water is a precious resource! Seen from space, we are the “blue planet”. It seems that there is a tremendous abundance of water here on earth; however, nearly 97% of the world's water is salty or otherwise undrinkable; another 2% is locked in icecaps and glaciers, and only 1% is left for all of humanity's needs. Only 1%! The average total home water use for each person in the U.S. is about 50 gallons a day. Water is precious indeed!

Thank you HaShem for showing us your wisdom!
We would like to thank Reb Avraham Cohen for his wonderful science articles in the past few weeks and we wish him much hatzlachon in all his endeavors.

GIVING HIS WIFE SOME APPRECIATION OF WHO HER HUSBAND REALLY WAS

Rabbi Avraham Stern, a grandson of Rabbi Hirsch Diskind, shared the following story he heard from his grandfather.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky would regularly visit Reb Yechiel Mordechai Gordon, the Lomzer Rosh Yeshiva, each Friday after he finished giving shiur in Torah V'daas. It was not an easy commute. It was a train and a bus, and it was an exhausting trip to do each way and then head home in time to prepare for Shabbos.

My grandfather once asked him why he goes to such lengths to visit him each week. Is it really necessary at such personal sacrifice? Reb Yaakov explained the reason for his behavior. He described how he had been a refugee during the first world war and had found refuge in the Lomza Yeshiva where he spent a good part of the war years. He was eternally grateful to the Rosh Yeshiva, Reb Yechiel Mordechai, for all that he had done for him, providing him with a safe haven where he was able to continue to thrive, away from both physical and spiritual dangers.

Unfortunately, during the second world war, Reb Yechiel Mordechai lost his wife and children, along with his beloved talmidim and never fully recovered from his devastating loss. Upon his arrival in America after the war, he remarried an American woman who had lost her husband with no children. She was a very choshuve person, but she had never seen Reb Yechiel Mordechai in his former glory, as one of the leading Roshei Yeshiva in pre-war Europe. In America during those years, he did not have any real position either and his stature in her eyes may not have been reflective of his true greatness. The man she knew was a mere shadow of his former self, with a heart laden with the loss and pain and suffering from all the horrors he had witnessed during the war years.

Rav Yaakov felt compelled to visit him regularly in order to give his wife some appreciation of who her husband really was and of his importance and regard in the pre-war Torah world. He reasoned that it would surely make a strong impression on her if the Torah V'daas Rosh Yeshiva, Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky, deemed it worthy to shlep out each week to visit her husband, he must really be someone special.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the King and the donkey, Rav Zilberstein brought this question to his father in law, Rav Yosef Elyashiv. Rav Elyashiv answered that the signs of the donkey and the roots are called "Umdena". We are unable to extract money with an Umdena and so it would not be sufficient in Beis Din to extract the land.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated

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