

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



I'D LIKE IT BACK PLEASE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha, Acharei Mos Kedoshim, talks about the mitzvah of v'ahava l'reacha kamocho, to love your fellow as yourself. This is the source of the command to do acts of kindness to our fellow.

One example of the greatest acts of kindness a person can do is to donate one of their kidneys to a person who needs one.

Today, Jewish organizations like Renewal help facilitate these incredible mitzvos and the people who donate kidneys are very special heroes.

Here is a fascinating question that was brought before Rav Zilberstein.

Yosef had a first cousin, Shaya, who needed a kidney transplant. Yosef got tested and he learned that he was a match and was a good donor candidate.

Yosef was excited to do the mitzvah and underwent the surgery to remove and donate



JUST THINK ABOUT IT!

The first mitzvah of Kedoshim instructs us 'to be holy because HaShem your G.D is holy'. The Torah is stating that HaShem's holiness is the cause for us to be holy. Holiness in this context refers to being removed from the materialism of this world.

The notion of HaShem's holiness is that He is removed from the material world, He exists outside of this universe. To be more accurate, HaShem exists outside the spiritual realms as well; He created those realms just as He created the material world. HaShem is therefore Absolute Holiness. The question we must ask is how can HaShem's holiness be the reason for us to be holy? HaShem's holiness is intrinsic and such holiness within the sphere of the human condition is absurd. We understand that the Torah would not instruct us to be creators because HaShem is a creator. Such a mitzvah would be absurd since creation is the exclusive domain of HaShem. In a similar way HaShem's holiness cannot be the reason for Man to be holy since His holiness is of a totally different nature.

The Midrash explains our verse in the following context. "With this mitzvah HaShem is telling His people; if you will make yourselves holy I will consider it as though you made Me holy. If you do not make yourselves holy I will consider it as though you profaned Me."

Without question, whether or not we are holy, HaShem's holiness remains unchanged. We cannot alter Him in any way. How shall we therefore understand this Midrash?

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh explains this Midrash using the principle found in the Zohar. The Zohar teaches us that every mitzvah corresponds to a different body part.

his kidney. The kidney was successfully transferred to Shaya and Shaya made a remarkable recovery.

But a tragic accident occurred. After Shaya recovered from the kidney transplant, he got into a terrible car accident. He later died in the hospital.

When Yosef recovered from the shock he immediately called a Rav.

He asked his Rav if it would be permitted for him to request that they preserve the kidney and return it to him? Reusing a kidney that was donated is a medical procedure that is rare but possible under special conditions.

On one hand, the kidney belonged to Yosef originally so it was just returning back to the original owner.

But on the other hand, removing a kidney from a deceased person is normally not allowed. This is called Nivul Hames, desecrating a dead body. It is only allowed to be done to save a life. But In this case, no life was being saved. Yosef was just reclaiming his old kidney. Perhaps removing a kidney from a deceased person would be considered nivul hames.

In addition to the question of nivul hames, was Yosef allowed to undergo this surgery? One is normally only allowed to do a surgery for a compelling reason. Otherwise, it is called chavala. We are not allowed to cut or harm our bodies unless it is for a very important reason.

Right now Yosef was healthy with just one kidney, was it permitted to undergo surgery to regain his second one?

What do you think, was it permitted to remove the kidney and do surgery to return the kidney to Yosef?

See Chashukei Chemed Bava Basra Page 563

MITZVA MEME



*-Rabbi Simcha Bunim
of P'shis'cha*

The 248 positive mitzvos correspond to the 248 limbs of the body and the 365 negative mitzvos correspond to the 365 sinews of the body. When a person fulfills a mitzvah he brings the sanctity of that mitzvah into the respective body part.

To further appreciate this notion the Ohr Hachaim draws our attention to the structure of the word 'mitzvah'. The word 'mitzvah' is spelled 'mem' 'tzadi' 'vuv' 'hei'. The first two letters 'mem' and 'tzadi' are interchangeable with 'yud' and 'hei' using the א"ת method of gematria. The final two letters of mitzvah are 'vuv' 'hei'. Hence the four letters of 'mitzvah' actually form the tetragrammaton, the primary Name of HaShem.

What follows therefore is that our fulfillment of mitzvos is the mechanism by which the Name of HaShem rests within our very bodies!

We are taught that the intent and the thoughts of the person doing the mitzvah affects the impact of the mitzvah. Giving charity

with the intent to impress my friends will negatively impact the effect of my mitzvah. The more a mitzvah is done exclusively for the sake of HaShem the greater its impact on bringing HaShem into that person's body will be.

There are many mitzvos whose fulfillment is quite enjoyable and one is liable to perform those mitzvos with the sole intent of his personal enjoyment. In that case, the person is lowering the potential of his mitzvah to becoming a vehicle of personal material enjoyment. Naturally, that would lower the Name of HaShem which accompanies the mitzvah to a base material level. If, on the other hand, the person fulfills those mitzvos for the exclusive intent of doing HaShem's Will, then he has elevated the Name of HaShem outside of the material world. He has made that Name of HaShem holy!

HaShem therefore instructs us; Be holy because I am Holy and My holiness is dependent upon your mitzvos. So to speak, HaShem's entry into our bodies through our performance of His mitzvos, will either be holy or otherwise depending on what our thoughts will be. It is the thought that counts.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

CHOCOLATE

Let's learn about another popular food that has fascinating psychoactive effects; Chocolate.

Chocolate beverages were invented by Mesoamericans like the Aztecs and Mayan. The earliest signs of its use have been found at Aztec sites dating from the 19th century BC. The English word "chocolate" comes from the Aztec word *xocolātl*. (pronounced *shokolatil*) Chocolate was consumed not as a solid but as a liquid for 90% of its history. The Aztecs, who drank it without any sweetener, incorporated cacao and chocolate into their culture.

The tree that chocolate is produced from is called "Theobroma cacao" which means "food of the gods". The Aztecs believed that chocolate was the food of their gods and that it was shared with them by their god Quetzalcoatl who was later punished by the other gods for sharing chocolate with humans. Drinking Chocolate was a part of the worship of their god, which involved human sacrifices. It is said that the Aztec emperor Montezuma drank 50 cups of cacao a day from a golden chalice. Cacao beans were so valuable to early Mesoamericans that they were used as currency.

Christopher Columbus and his son Ferdinand first encountered chocolate and the cacao bean on Columbus's fourth mission to the Americas on August 15, 1502. After the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs, chocolate was imported to Europe. There, it quickly became a court favorite. The Spanish friars added sugar, honey, and vanilla to chocolate in order to counteract its natural bitterness.

Today chocolate is one of the most popular food types and flavors in the world, and the average Brit, Swiss, or German citizen will each eat around 24 pounds of chocolate a year. This is double what the average American eats.

How exactly is chocolate made? It is actually quite complicated. Chocolate comes from a fruit called cacao (pronounced ca-cow). The cacao tree (*Theobroma cacao*) is an evergreen from the family *Malvaceae* which is related to okra and cotton. So chocolate technically comes from a vegetable related to okra. The fruit, called a cacao pod, is oval, 6–12 inches long, weighing about 1 pound and ripens to yellow or orange. Inside the cacao fruit are seeds. The seeds have an intense bitter taste and must be fermented to develop the flavor. After fermentation, the beans are dried, cleaned, and roasted. Then the shell of the seed is removed to produce cacao nibs, which are then ground to cocoa mass. Then the cocoa mass is liquefied by heating and is called chocolate liquor. The liquor is then also cooled and processed into its two components: cocoa solids and cocoa butter. So chocolate is made by cutting a pod, taking out its seeds then fermenting those seeds, then removing the shell of the seeds, then grinding it, liquefying it, and then sepa-

rating it into solids and butter.

It takes 400 cacao beans to make one pound of chocolate. Each cacao tree produces approximately 2,500 beans. That means that a whole cacao tree will only produce about 6.5 pounds of chocolate in its lifetime. Because cacao trees are so delicate, farmers lose, on average, 30 percent of their crop each year.

Why do we love chocolate so much? Chocolate has a few very special qualities. Chocolate has a special melting point. It is the only edible substance to melt at around 93° F, just below the human body temperature. That's why chocolate, more than any other food melts so easily on your tongue.

Chocolate has 3 times more flavor compounds than red wine; red wine has just 200 whereas chocolate has 600.

Chocolate contains quite a few mood-boosting ingredients, including tryptophan, which stimulates the mood-boosting hormone serotonin, and a compound called anandamide, which can provide a sense of well-being as it binds to the dopamine receptors in the brain. It may also suppress the release of the stress hormone cortisol. Chocolate boosts the production of endorphins, better known as the 'feel-good' chemical of your brain. After eating it, you may experience a more positive outlook, and possibly even a sense of euphoria, thanks to the way it impacts your hormones. Chocolate, just like a cup of coffee, contains caffeine, and that can give a boost to your central nervous system. Dark chocolate can improve blood flow to the brain, which can improve attention span, memory, reaction time, and problem-solving skills. A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* observed that places where chocolate consumption is highest, have the most Nobel Prize recipients. That could be a coincidence, but it is possible that intelligence or other measures of high brain function are actually improved by the consumption of chocolate flavanols (found in dark chocolate and cocoa, among other foods) that benefit human brain function.

Interestingly, chocolate contains alkaloids such as theobromine and phenethylamine, which have physiological effects in humans. However, theobromine is toxic to animals, like dogs and cats, so make sure not to share your chocolate bar with your pet.

Here is one interesting historical sidenote. Chocolate actually inspired the creation of the microwave. Percy Spence, a scientist working on WWII radar loved chocolate. Once he had a bar in his pocket. After being near a magnetron of the radar he noticed that the chocolate bar in his pocket had melted. He realized magnetrons could be used to heat food quickly and helped invent the microwave oven.

IT WOULD BE WRONG TO VIOLATE A TORAH MITZVAH IN ORDER TO FULFILL A RABBINICAL MITZVAH

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky once attended a bar mitzvah where the bar mitzvah boy had a difficult time with the Torah reading. In the middle of the reading, for a personal reason Rav Yaakov had to briefly leave the shul.

When Rav Yaakov returned, he was asked if he wanted the portion to be read again from the point where he had left.

R' Yaakov declined this offer.

Rav Yaakov explained that he was concerned that the bar mitzvah boy would think that the portion was being read again because he had read poorly.

Rav Yaakov continued: "Krias Hatorah (the public Torah reading) is a Rabbinic mitzvah, but the requirement that we not cause hurt or embarrassment to our fellow Jew is mandated by the Torah. It would be wrong to violate a Torah mitzvah in order to fulfill a rabbinical mitzvah."

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Pictured: Rabbi Chaim Yisroel Belsky zt"l (left) with his rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l, at Camp Ohr Shraga in 1969.



THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of the Torah found in the Kovno Ghetto, Rav Oshry, who was about 28 years old at the time, told them that if the extra words are readable, and are not backwards, then it would not be permitted to erase them. See Shailos V'tshuvos Mimamakim Chelek 2 Chapter 14

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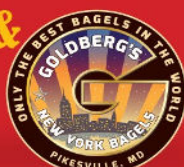
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