

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE SWITCH

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's parsha we learn that when Aharon died, the ananei hakavod (Clouds of Glory) left. This is because it was only in the zechus (merit) of Aharon that the bnei yisrael got the ananei hakavod. The Sfás Emes points out that Aharon was ohev shalom verodef shalom, he loved peace and pursued peace, and that is why he merited to draw down the sucas shalom, the clouds of peace.

The importance of pursuing peace leads us to the following true story.

Rav Cohn was a rosh yeshiva in a well known yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. Rav Cohn had to make a fundraising trip to the US for his yeshiva. He called Rafi Rubin who was a well known ba'al tzedakah and philanthropist. Rafi spoke to him on the phone and said, "I would be happy to help your yeshiva. I can give you 10,000 dollars. I have to leave my office at 2PM. Can you come to my office at 1:45 and I will give you the check?"

Rav Cohn was extremely excited and gratified. He took a taxi to Rafi Rubin's plush



CLEAN THE SLATE

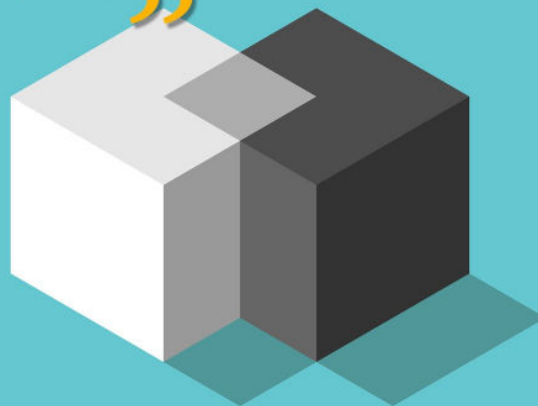
In this week's Parsha, Chukas, Moshe makes the fateful mistake of striking the rock to give forth its water instead of speaking to it. The consequence of his mistake was that he was not allowed to lead his people into the Land of Israel. Our Sages explain that if Moshe would have led us into the Land, he would have also constructed the Beis Hamikdosh which would lead to a disaster as follows.

Everything Moshe achieved had an everlasting impact, never to be terminated. This includes the giving of Torah to his people, this includes the making of the ashes of the Red Heifer, this includes the creation of the Anointing Oil used on the Mishkan and his building the Mishkan itself which exists until this very day. If Moshe were to construct the Beis Hamikdosh in the Land, this edifice would be invincible and there would be no opportunity for it to be destroyed. When, later in their history, the Jewish people would sin, their deserving punishment would not be able to be expressed on the destruction of the Temple, as it would be invincible. Rather it would lead to a destruction of the people themselves, Heaven forbid. HaShem foresaw the wicked deeds our people would perform later in history, He therefore did not allow Moshe to lead the people there, so that the consequence of their later deeds would be expressed on HaShem's Temple instead of on His people.

We must ask if this is the case, what would have happened had Moshe spoken to the rock and the rock would have given forth its water as HaShem instructed. The reading of the Parsha implies that Moshe and Aaron would have led the people

MITZVA MEME

“Compromising does not mean that you are wrong and the other is right. It means that you value your relationship more than your ego.”



office.

At 1:43 a rosh yeshiva came to Rafi's office. Rafi greeted him warmly and handed him a check. The Rosh yeshiva's eyes opened wide when he saw the sum on the check. He gave Rafi an effusive bracha and left the office.

Meanwhile Rav Cohn arrived in a taxi at Mr. Rubin's office. As he walked into the office waiting room, he saw another well known rosh yeshiva leave the office, with a big smile on his face.

Rav Cohn approached Rafi and said, "Shalom aleichem, I'm here for our 1:45 appointment."

Rafi looked at him with shock. "Oh I thought the Rav before you was the Rosh Yeshiva. Yikes, both of you are Roshei Yeshiva of very worthy institutions and I didn't realize that he was a different person than you. I already gave him a check of \$10,000. I'll be honest, I don't have any more money in my tzedaka account. Please come back next year and I will give you very generously."

But Rav Cohn replied, "To be totally honest, I feel really bad. I thought I had a commitment from you today. How can I go back with such a big budget shortfall?"

Rafi replied, "You are right. Both of you are running very exemplary organizations. I'm terribly sorry but I have to run now. Please work out what to do with the money between yourselves".

Rafi left the office and Rav Cohn quickly caught up to the other rosh yeshiva, named Rav Siegal and explained the error.

The two Roshei Yeshiva wanted to know what the halacha is with regard to dealing with the check. Should the entire amount go to the second Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Siegal, since he is the one who Rafi gave the check to? Or should the entire amount go to Rav Cohn, as he was the one who Rafi thought he was giving to? Or should they both split it between themselves?

What do you think?

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into the Land. What would have been when the people would sin later in history?

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh explains that had everything with the rock gone according to HaShem's plan, the Kiddush HaShem that would have resulted from that experience would have been so profound that their complete emunah in HaShem would have been eternally sealed in their neshamos. All residual corruption from the Golden Calf and the Spies that still lingered in the people would have been completely eradicated. The impact of the event would be so great that the descendants of these people would have such a clarity of awareness of HaShem that they would have no tendency to sin.

Moshe would have been able to lead his people into the Land and to build the Beis Hamikdosh without any concern of some later generation going wayward.

If we extend the insight of the Ohr Hachaim one step further I believe it is saying that every experience of Kiddush HaShem or any other emunah building experience that we have, builds more than just our own emunah. It has the power to extend its reach to impact the emunah of our children and even further descendants. Naturally, no experience will achieve the impact of Moshe Rabbeinu's experience with the rock. Nevertheless, experiences that we have can touch the core of our neshamos, to the extent that we allow them, and affect our future generations.

As we move deeper in the 21st century and the challenges that envelope us and our families increase, we must grab onto as much kiddush HaShem and emunah experiences that we can. We must allow these messages to penetrate deep inside our neshmos. If we let those inspirations permeate ourselves and our families we can daven and hope to HaShem to please help us raise future generations of children who fear and love HaShem.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION THE TOMATO

In the past weeks, we learned about bell and chili peppers that originated in the Americas. This week, let's learn about another fruit that originated in America, the Tomato.

The tomato species originated in South America and was first domesticated by the Aztecs. The original wild versions of tomatoes were the size of peas. The Aztecs called it *tomatl* (pronounced toe-mah-till), which means "the swelling fruit", and they used tomatoes in their cooking. This gave rise to the Spanish word *tomate*, from which the English word tomato derived. The Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés may have been the first to transfer a small yellow tomato to Europe after he captured the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan. From there, the tomato was introduced to Europe and other parts of the European-colonized world during the 16th century.

This fact actually helps to solve an ongoing "machlokes" (dispute). The usual pronunciation of tomato in American English is "Toe-may-to". In British English, it is usually "Toe-mah-toe". But the truth is, it appears that the British pronunciation is more precise and aligned with the original Aztec word "toe-mah-till".

The Spanish first introduced tomatoes to Europe, where they became used in Spanish food. The first tomatoes in Europe were yellow varieties. That is why the Italian word for tomato is *pomodoro* which translates to golden apple. However, when the tomato reached France, Italy, and northern Europe, it was regarded with suspicion as a food because botanists recognized that it was a nightshade, a relative of the poisonous belladonna plant. In fact, the leaves and immature fruit of tomato contain *tomatine*, which in large quantities would be toxic. Tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, tobacco and eggplants all belong to the same botanical family known as nightshades. Nightshade plants contain poisons, including one called *solanine*. While ingesting nightshade plant stems, leaves and sometimes berries can be fatal, fruits and vegetables in this same classification of plant — many of which you'll find at your local grocery store — are actually safe to eat.

Therefore tomatoes were grown mainly as ornamentals early on after their arrival in Italy. They were only incorporated into the local cuisine in the late 17th or early 18th century.

The tomato was introduced to China, likely via the Philippines or Macau, in the 1500s. The Chinese gave it the name "the barbarian eggplant", as they named many foods introduced from abroad.

There is a misconception that the tomato and tomato sauce originated from Italian cuisine since its introduction from the Americas. But really it came from the Spanish. Pizza however comes from Italy and was originally eaten without tomato sauce. Pizza was first recorded in the 10th century in Southern Italy. The word Pizza comes from the word Pita which means flatbread. Pita, we know, comes from the Hebrew

word *Pas*. Originally Pizza was a flat bread with toppings like garlic, salt, and cheese. After tomatoes and tomato sauce were brought by the Spanish to Italy, pizza with marinara sauce was introduced around the year 1735.

Even today there is a strong connection between the tomato and Spain. There is a very messy annual festival in Buñol, Spain. It goes by the name *La Tomatina*. It involves tomatoes but what people do is, they don't eat tomatoes. They throw tomatoes at each other. Some 150,000 tomatoes are used. On August 30, 2007, 40,000 Spaniards gathered in Buñol to throw 254,000 pounds of tomatoes at each other in the yearly *Tomatina* festival.

Is the tomato a fruit or a vegetable? This question had legal ramifications and has led to a legal dispute in the United States. In 1887, the U.S. imposed a tariff on vegetables, but not on fruit. This caused the tomato's status to become a matter of legal importance. Botanically, a tomato is a fruit—a berry, consisting of the ovary, together with its seeds, of a flowering plant. However, the tomato is considered a "culinary vegetable" because it is less sweet than typical fruits; it is typically served as part of a salad or main course of a meal, and not as a dessert. As an aside, tomatoes are not the only food source with this ambiguity; bell peppers, cucumbers, green beans, eggplants, avocados, and squashes of all kinds (such as zucchini and pumpkins) are all botanically fruit, yet cooked as vegetables. So the U.S. Supreme Court in *Nix v. Hedden*, settled the tariff controversy on May 10, 1893, by declaring that the tomato is a vegetable, because they are not served as dessert and they are generally served with dinner.

Tomatoes are the world's most popular fruit. With an annual production of 60 million tons, they remain the world's most demanded and most popular fruit. The second spot goes to bananas and third to apples, followed by oranges and watermelons respectively in 4th and 5th spot.

According to the USDA, Americans eat 22-24 pounds of tomatoes per person, per year. About half of that comes in the form of ketchup and tomato sauce. Why are tomatoes such an important ingredient in so much of our food? Part of this is because tomatoes are a significant source of *umami* (savory) flavor, one of the five basic tastes.

Tomato plants typically grow to 3–10 ft in height. There are over 10,000 varieties of tomato. We normally buy red tomatoes, but tomatoes come in a variety of colors including pink, purple, black, yellow and white. As of 2008, the heaviest tomato harvested, weighed 7 lb 12 oz and was grown in Oklahoma in 1986. When you hold a tomato it seems very solid, but interestingly 94.5% of the weight of a typical tomato is nothing but water!

How wondrous is your creation, Hashem.

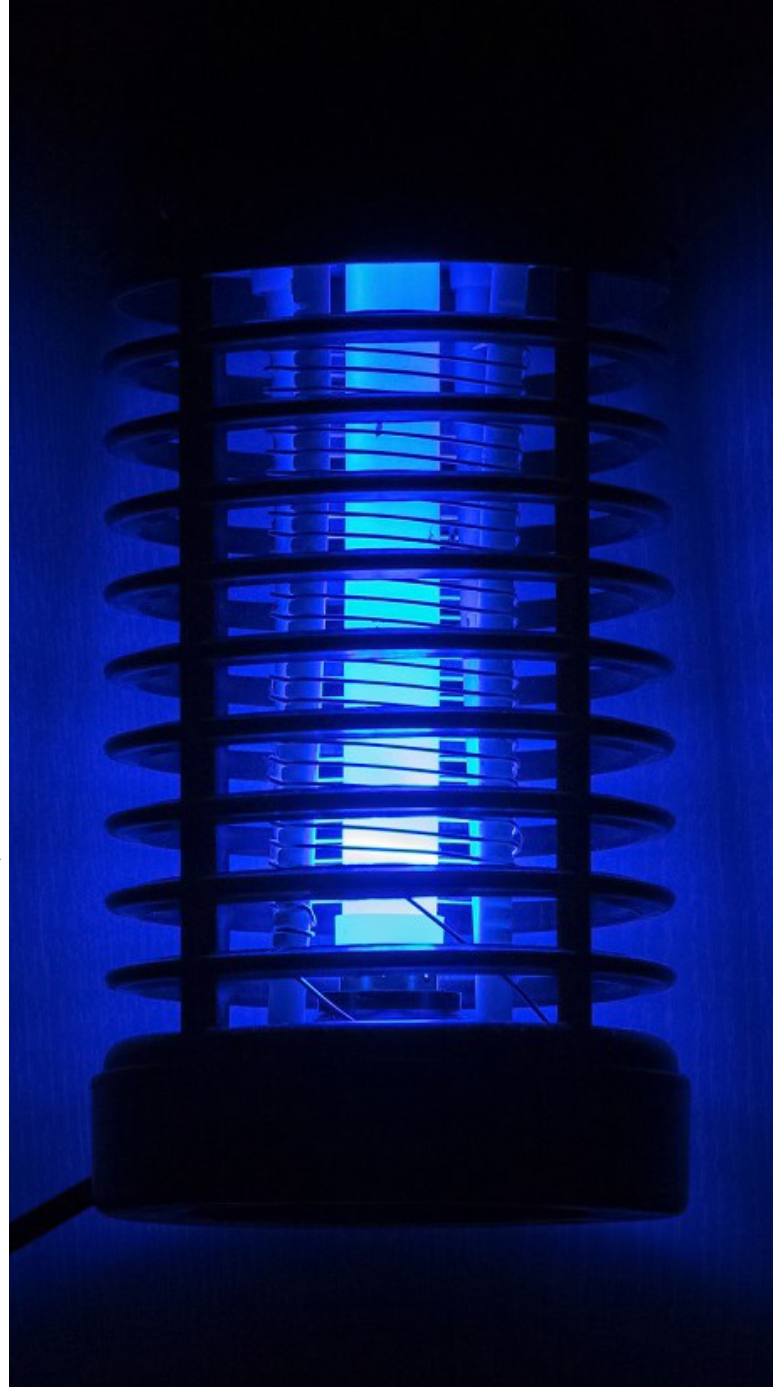
THE BLUE LIGHT

The Lev Simcha, the Gerer Rebbe, once stayed in a rented room in Teveria. During the first days of his stay the television antenna of the adjacent building fell and landed on the roof above his room. The Lev Simcha's attendants did not pay any attention to the matter, as it did not seem to disturb anyone. The next morning during his walk, the Lev Simcha mentioned to his accompanying attendant that mosquitoes had bothered him the entire night. The attendant later mentioned the incident to another attendant, Who suggested buying a blue electrical light that keeps flying insects away. "I brought one with me from Yerushalayim," remarked the first attendant, "but when I tried to set it up, the Rebbe told me not to, without giving any explanation."

On the next morning's walk, the Lev Simcha again complained about the mosquitoes. "We have the apparatus with the blue light..." said the attendant. "Yes, I know," the Lev Simcha answered. "But, no, it's not necessary." Again, no explanation was given. The Lev Simcha did not complain again during the days that followed, but it was obvious that the mosquitoes were causing him discomfort at night, and his refusal to use the anti-insect light remained a mystery. One morning the Lev Simcha pointed out to the attendant that there was a "foreign object," which belonged to their neighbor, on the roof. "Why does it have to be on our roof?" he asked. "Perhaps someone should speak to him about removing it." The neighbor was spoken to, and he promised to call a technician and have the antenna restored to its proper place. When time passed and nothing was done, the attendants returned to the owner and offered to move the antenna themselves. "No," the owner objected. "Only a technician should handle it. Don't worry, I'll call one." Once again the owner did not keep his word, and the antenna remained where it had fallen, above the Lev Simcha's room. The attendants decided that the antenna had to be removed from the Rebbe's roof, and that afternoon they climbed up on the roof and moved it back to the neighbor's section of the roof. When they returned with their mission accomplished, the Lev Simcha greeted them cheerfully and asked, "Now, where is that blue light you brought? Let's set it up."

Only then did the solution to the mystery dawn on the attendants. With the antenna on the roof above his room, the Lev Simcha was concerned that people would think that the blue light was the light of a television screen. The Lev Simcha, therefore, chose to suffer from the mosquitoes (and not trouble his attendants by asking them to move the antenna) rather than risk the possibility that someone might deduce from his actions that it is permitted to have a television set!

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about repaying the theft, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the boy and the parents are not obligated to pay the neighbor.

This week's TableTalk is sponsored as a zechus for a refuah shelaimoh for our dear brother-in-law, R' Yonason Carmen, shilt"a. May all the Torah discussions generated from this edition of TableTalk create many merits that will be the catalyst for a complete refuah for

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