



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE BUNNY

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Parsha we have a reference to the mitzvah of tzar baalei chaim, not causing animals any needless pain. We find that the angel asked Bilam, "Why did you beat your donkey?" (Bamidbar 22,32) The Sefer Chasidim 666 writes that this request is a reference to the Torah prohibition of causing an animal needless suffering.

There is also a mitzvah in the Torah that says if the animal of your fellow is lost, and you find it, you have a mitzvah to return it to the owner. (Shmos 23,4)

But what happens when these two mandates are in conflict with each other? This comes up in the following true story:

Eli was a neighbor of the Klein family.



YOU CHOOSE - HE SUPPORTS

In this week's Haftorah, the prophet Micha reprimands his people for not appreciating what HaShem had done for them. "He took you out of Egypt and gave you Moshe, Aharon and Miriam. He protected you from the curses of Bilam." Our Sages teach us that HaShem altered His daily schedule to protect us from the curses of Bilam which would have been devastating. Every day there is one moment during which HaShem expresses His anger over the wrongdoings that occur in the world. Bilam knew exactly when that moment was and planned on expressing his curse at that exact moment. If HaShem had expressed that moment of anger Bilam's curse would have been effective, G.D forbid. Therefore, Micha implores his people to appreciate what HaShem did for them.

The question that we must ask is why HaShem allowed Bilam to curse our people? Initially, HaShem told Bilam that he should not go, because he will not succeed in cursing them. "They are a blessed people". Bilam, nevertheless, thought he could outsmart HaShem. So, he asked HaShem again if he could go and this time HaShem told him that if he really wishes to go, he may, however, he will be limited in what he is able to say.

If HaShem would have told him outright "YOU MAY NOT GO" he would not have gone. He knew that he needed HaShem's permission. Without that permission it would be futile. HaShem, however, did give him permission to go and so he went to curse HaShem's people. And to protect His people, Ha-

MITZVA MEME

The Klein's bought their children a pet rabbit. They kept the rabbit in a cage outside. To Eli's great dismay, he saw the Klein children purposely hurting the rabbit by poking it with sticks, and throwing rocks at it. The kids laughed as the rabbit reacted to their mean taunts and torment. Eli would often exhort the neighbors that it was forbidden to do this and it was tzar baalei chaim, but they simply ignored him or laughed.

One day the Klein children left the rabbit's cage open, and the rabbit seized the opportunity and escaped the cage to freedom.

Eli saw the rabbit escape and he watched it walk around outside his property. Eli felt very conflicted.

On one hand he knew that there was a mitzvah of hashavas aveida, to return a fellow's lost animal. Perhaps he had an obligation to try to retrieve the rabbit and return it to the Kleins.

But on the other hand, if he would return the animal, it would cause the animal to endure more pain. He would be facilitating the violation of tzar baalei chaim.

What was Eli's obligation? Should he return the rabbit to do the mitzvah of returning lost objects, or should he let it free to fulfill the mitzvah of preventing tzar baalei chaim?

What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Bereishis 218



Shem altered His scheduled anger. If it is a great 'sacrifice' on HaShem's part to alter His schedule, why not simply tell Bilam that he may not go?

Our Sages learn from Bilam that if Man chooses to reject the Will of HaShem, HaShem will still guide him and support him in his choice! The story of Bilam demonstrates that not only will HaShem support Man's bad choices but He will even alter His daily schedule in order to accommodate the schemes of an evil Bilam!

Why is HaShem so committed to Man? Doesn't HaShem want that Man not sin at all? If Man decides to sin, why provide the guidance and support? This will only hurt Man. The answer of course, is that there is nothing more sacred

in this world than Man's free will. HaShem wants that there should be no fetters restraining Man from carrying out his decisions. If Man turns to HaShem for His support He will offer it. The choice to do evil must be equal to the choice to do good.

The lesson we learn from Bilam is the extent of how far HaShem goes to provide support for Man's choice. When Bilam chose to curse His people HaShem gave complete support including changing His schedule. It follows then that if a person chooses to keep Shabbos in its entirety, get a bris later in life or to master the entire Shas or any other goal, HaShem will definitely provide him complete support in seeing this goal achieved. Never should a person doubt the Divine support he will receive in his endeavor.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

ONIONS

In recent weeks we learned about Garlic. Today let's learn about a relative of Garlic, Onions.

Today, onions are a staple in the cuisine of cultures worldwide. Onions are cooked as a vegetable side dish, prepared as part of soups, stews and sauces, eaten raw or used to make relishes and pickles. It was such a staple that General Ulysses S. Grant, during the Civil War, sent a telegram, addressed to the War Department, reading – "I will not move my army without onions". The result was that three train cars loaded with onions were immediately shipped. The truth is that onions are one of the oldest foods known to the human race.

The onion plant has been grown and selectively bred in cultivation for at least 5,000 years. The first organized cultivation of onions started in the area of Iran (Babylon) some 5,000 years ago. They quickly spread around the world, and became popular for their medicinal value and ease of storing in the winter. Onions were used in Egyptian burials, as evidenced by onion traces found in the eye sockets of Ramesses IV. Onions are mentioned in the Torah as one of the foods the Bnei Yisrael ate in Mitzrayim. According to texts collected in the fifth/sixth century CE by Apicius (said to have been a gourmet), onions were used in many Roman recipes. Onions were taken to North America by the first European settlers, only to discover that onions were already readily available to the Native Americans and they were already in wide use in their cooking.

The onion is a close relative of garlic, scallion, leeks and chives. In Yiddish the onion is pronounced Tzibel. In Spanish it's cebolla. In Italian, cipolla, Polish cebula and German Zwiebel.

This comes from the Latin word *cepull* (pronounced tzebul). Entomologists say that this Latin word comes on loan from an "unknown language". But we know what that language is! Tzibel is just a switch of letters, called a metathesis, of the Hebrew word Batzel. Metathesis is a process that historically shaped thousands of words. For example, the English words Bird and Horse came from Old English *bridd* and *hros*.

Now, what is the origin of the English word onion? Interestingly, it comes from the Latin word *unio* literally "one, unity." Onion really means Union. The idea is that the successive layers of an onion create one union. This is in contrast to its cousin the garlic.

We know that freshly cut onions often cause a stinging sensation in the eyes of people nearby, and often uncontrollable tears. Onions really do make you cry. Why does this happen? This is caused by the release of a

volatile liquid, syn-propanethial-S-oxide and its aerosol, which stimulates nerves in the eye. This was a defense mechanism created by Hashem.

This gas is produced by a complicated chain of reactions. Chopping an onion causes damage to cells which release enzymes called alliinases. These break down amino acid sulfoxides and generate sulfenic acids. A specific sulfenic acid, 1-propenesulfenic acid, is rapidly acted on by a second enzyme, the lachrymatory factor synthase (called LFS), producing the syn-propanethial-S-oxide. This gas spreads through the air and soon reaches the eyes, where it activates sensory neurons. The sulfuric acid in our eyes leads to a painful sensation and the brain immediately acts. In a defensive stance, our brain makes our eyes produce tears that eliminate the acid. Lacrimal glands produce tears to dilute and flush out the irritant. That's what we call crying while cutting onions.

In 2008, the New Zealand Institute for Crop and Food Research created "no tears" onions by genetically modifying them to prevent the synthesis of LFS in onions. However the lack of LFS actually leads to an inferior flavor. Some studies have explored developing LFS as a nonlethal deterrent against thieves and intruders.

Onions typically grow to a height of 6 to 18 inches. The leaves are yellowish to bluish green. Onions require a high level of nutrients in the soil. Onions are also day-length sensitive. This means that onion bulbs begin growing only after the number of daylight hours has surpassed some minimal quantity. Many European onions are referred to as "long-day" onions, producing bulbs only after 14 hours or more of daylight occurs. Onions are a cool-weather crop and can be grown in climate zones as cold as 40 degrees below zero. There are 27 different types of onions. But the most common onions are normally available in three color varieties: yellow, red, and white. Yellow onions are sweeter. Red onions are known for their sharp pungent flavor and are often used raw and in grilling. White onions are milder in flavor and have a particularly sweet flavor when sautéed.

The country that eats the most onions per capita is Libya, where each person eats about 66.8 pounds of onions every year. The average American eats almost 18.8 pounds of fresh and storage type onions every year.

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the largest onion ever grown weighed 10 pounds 14 ounces. It was grown by V. Throup of Silsden, England. Also, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, the fastest that someone ate a raw onion was in 29.56 seconds. This record was set on December 13th, 2013 by Yusuke Yamaguchi in Japan.

HE IS HERE FOR YOU TO CREATE A KIDDUSH HASHEM

Rav Manis Mandel was the beloved principal of Yeshiva of Brooklyn (YOB) and was known as a special tzadik.

A student of Rav Mandel related the following story.

When I came to the school, the black janitor, Teddy, was an old man and did very little other than mop up an occasional spill. But Rav Mandel refused to let him go. Rabbi Mandel warned us, "If anyone does anything or says anything that upsets Teddy, she will be in very big trouble".

One day, Rabbi Mandel came into our classroom, picked up some papers off the floor, and said, "If necessary, I will be the one to pick up the papers on the floor so that our mikdash me'at will be clean. "

And then he added, "You think that Teddy is here to clean up after you? The truth is Teddy is here for you to create a kiddush Hashem before him by cleaning up after yourselves to make it easier for him to do his job."

(From Rabbi Manis Mandel, A Legendary Mechanech and Tzadik. By Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, Published By Artsroll Mesorah. Preprinted With Permission From The Copyright Holders.)



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the large check that was given to a second Rosh Yeshiva, and not the Rosh Yeshiva who received the commitment, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the second Rosh Yeshiva needs to return the check to the one who first received the commitment. This is because that pledge is like a Neder, a vow.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of this year's 20th yahrzeit of our dear father

נחום משה בן מיכאל בן ציון

Rabbi Nahum M. Ben-Natan, z"l

Our father dedicated his life to bringing Jews from all walks of life closer to Hashem and his warmth and approachability endeared him to all.

His life revolved around Shabbos and he loved having guests and lively discussions at the Shabbos table.

May the Torah discussions generated from this week's TableTalk be an aliyah for his neshama.

Adeena and Moshe Pelberg

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