

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



REGISTRATION NEGLECT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This coming week we are looking forward to Yom Kippur. The sefer Derech Hashem describes how the special spiritual energy of Yom Kippur gives an inner cleansing of the tumah (spiritual blockage) accumulated by our aveiros, and repairs the negative outer consequences of any transgressions we may have done. Our Sages teach however that this special blessing of Yom Kippur only works if we first appease our fellow man if we have caused them pain.

This leads us to the following interesting true story.

Sarah had a friend, Rachel, who once asked to borrow her car. Sarah said, "Sure not a problem", and she handed Rachel her keys. Rachel came back a few hours later with a greatly distressed look on her face. She also held a ticket of \$800. "What happened?", Sarah asked her.

Rachel said this is what happened:

I was driving on the highway and I got an important phone call. I answered the call and shortly after I remembered that our state recently



DEFINING SUCCESS

We say in our Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur prayers "O HaShem, instill Your awe upon all Your works and Your dread upon all that You have created." Do we really mean what we say? Do we really want HaShem to instill dread upon all that He created? I am one of those creations – do I want dread instilled in me? There are plenty of movements in America whose growth will certainly create dread in HaShem's creatures. Is that what we really want?

Let us continue the prayer. "Let all Your works revere You and all creatures prostrate themselves before You. Let them all become a single society to do Your Will wholeheartedly." Well, that answers why we ask for it. The only question remains, do we really want it?

Obviously if we have been reciting this prayer on Rosh Hashanah as well as Yom Kippur for the past 2,500 years we must mean it.

Let us try to appreciate why we really mean what we ask for. In order to do so it is imperative that we clarify our societal priorities.

Every society has its own set of priorities. The method in determining what the society's priorities are is by asking a basic question to which the answer will identify those priorities. The question is "how does society define success". Let me place the question in the following context. You are walking by

prohibited driving while using a cell phone. I tried to finish the call, and of course, I passed a police officer.

The police officer saw me on the phone and turned his lights on, pulled me over and asked me for my registration. I passed him the registration that was in the glove compartments and he came back a few minutes later with a big frown. He said, "Ma'am, this registration has been expired for the past four years. What I'm going to do for you is I'm going to drop the ticket for driving while on the phone. Instead, for every year that that registration was expired, I'm going to give you a ticket for \$200. Therefore I'm gonna write you a ticket for \$800."

"I tried to explain to the officer that it wasn't my car but he was not sympathetic. So I'm sorry but here is your \$800 ticket because you didn't get your registration updated", Rachel concluded.

Sarah felt very uncomfortable. "Why should I have to pay this huge ticket? I have been driving for the past four years and there was never a problem. I never got pulled over, and I never make any careless choices that would attract the police. You got pulled over because you carelessly were talking on your phone. You have to pay the \$800 because it was your carelessness that caused the ticket. I never would have gotten the ticket.

But Rachel replied that she wasn't the owner of the car and it wasn't her responsibility to update the registration. Why should she pay for the ticket for this expired registration if that was not up to her?

This question was brought to Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein. What do you think? Who is responsible to pay for the ticket, the one who owned the car and neglected to renew the registration or the one who got the ticket because she was carelessly on the phone?

See Upiryo Matok Shemos 70



A person wrapped up in himself makes a very small package



a group of people and they are talking about a certain individual. Someone says "that guy is a very successful individual". What did the speaker mean by that? Did he mean that he has a happy marriage and his children respect him? Perhaps he meant that he is the CEO of a large company and he has 1000 people working under him. The answer to that question will tell you the priorities of that society.

In the Western society success is defined by material acquisition and affluence. Those are their societal priorities. At varying periods in Europe the societal priority was patriotism. People sacrificed many things to be able to serve in protecting the motherland.

The Jewish people's societal priority is to perfect the world

to become a home for the Presence of HaShem. We aim to create a world that is worthy of housing His Presence. When the world takes a downturn and declines in its moral standing we desperately turn to HaShem in assisting us in raising the moral standard. Unfortunately, it often takes drastic events to inspire the world to change their moral vector.

So even though nobody really wishes for the dread, if that is what it takes to recalibrate the world's moral standing we want it.

So, let us get back to our question; do we really want the situation in America's security to decline? The answer is No! However, if that is the only way to wake up the world to recognize that only HaShem can provide true security, then that is what we want.

May we see the day when the knowledge of HaShem fills the world like water fills the ocean.

Have a wonderful Shabbos, a successful Yom Kippur and an easy fast.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE KIKAYON AND CASTOR OIL

On Yom Kippur we read about the story of Yonah. At the end of the story, the Torah talks about a Kikayon tree that gave Yonah shade. Hashem caused the tree to die and Yonah was very distressed about its death. Hashem told Yonah that just like Yonah cared for the tree, Hashem cared for the people of Ninveh.

What exactly is a Kikayon Tree? The Radak says that this is the source of the Shemen Kik, Castor oil, referred to in the mishna as an oil that you cannot use to light Shabbos candles because of its viscosity. The tree has wide leaves that provide shade. Our Sages in the Gemara Shabbos (21a) say that people would use castor oil for medicinal purposes. Let's look at this a bit deeper. What exactly are the medicinal properties of castor oil?

Castor oil comes from *Ricinus communis*, the castor bean or castor oil plant. Castor is indigenous to the area of Eretz Yisrael, Lebanon, Jordan, as well as Eastern Africa, and India.

Castor is a fast-growing shrub that can reach the size of about 39 ft, but it is not very hard and it is harmed by cold. It has large leaves that can provide shade.

Castor seed is the source of castor oil, a multi-purpose vegetable oil that people have used for thousands of years.

In ancient Egypt, castor oil was burned as fuel in lamps, used as a natural remedy to treat ailments and given to pregnant women to stimulate labor. Even today it is used by some medical professionals to induce birth.

Today, Castor oil and its derivatives are used in the manufacturing of soaps, lubricants, hydraulic and brake fluids, paints, dyes, coatings, inks, cold-resistant plastics, waxes and polishes, nylon, pharmaceuticals and perfumes. Castor oil, or a castor oil derivative such as Kolli-phor EL is an excipient (an inactive substance) added to prescription drugs.

Castor oil is very thick and viscous and has been used as an effective motor lubricant in internal combustion engines like airplanes, and some racing cars. The lubricant company Castrol took its name from castor oil. Today it has been largely replaced by synthetic oils that are more stable and less toxic.

Let's look a bit deeper at Castor oil's medicinal properties.

Perhaps one of the best-known medicinal uses for castor oil is as a natural laxative that helps clear the bowels. In ancient Greece, castor oil was used as a laxative, and Pliny the Elder spoke of castor oil as "a strong purgative." While castor oil is considered safe in small doses, larger amounts can cause abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting.

Castor oil can also promote wound healing. Venelex, a popular ointment used in clinical settings to treat wounds, contains a mixture of castor oil and Peru balsam, a balm derived from the *Myroxylon* tree. Castor oil stimulates tissue growth so that a barrier can be formed between the wound and the environment, decreasing the risk of infection.

Castor oil when applied topically also reduces inflammation and relieves the pain of arthritis, psoriasis and even the pain of acne,

Interestingly Castor oil was called the palm of G-d, because of its reputed ability to heal wounds and cure ailments.

Castor oil is rich in ricinoleic acid, a monounsaturated fatty acid, and so it acts as a natural moisturizer. Castor oil is often used in cosmetics to promote hydration and is often added to products like lotions, makeup and cleansers.

Finally, many people use castor oil as a natural hair conditioner. Dry or damaged hair can especially benefit from an intense moisturizer like castor oil. Castor oil may benefit those who experience dandruff, a common scalp condition characterized by dry, flaky skin on the head.

On the flip side, although castor oil is generally considered safe, it can cause adverse reactions and unwanted side effects in some people. Castor Oil, *Ricinus communis* also contains the dangerous toxin, ricin, a water-soluble toxin, which is also present in lower concentrations throughout the plant. However, the heating process that castor oil undergoes deactivates it, allowing the oil to be used safely. *Ricinus* is also extremely allergenic and has an OPALS allergy scale rating of 10 out of 10. The plant is also a very strong trigger for asthma.

COVER UP MY PICTURE WITH THE PRESIDENT

Rav Moshe Sherer, the former head of Agudath Israel of America was not just concerned with the image Agudath Israel projected to the outside world, but also the image of Agudath Israel in the eyes of its own constituency.

Once, an annual report to be distributed at an Agudath Israel convention contained a large 8.5 by 11-inch photograph of Rabbi Sherer together with President George Bush, at the White House. Shortly before the convention, when it was already too late to redo the report, Rabbi Sherer had second thoughts about the prominence given to that particular picture. He felt that an organization based on fealty to the direction of gedolei Torah should not act as if the greatest possible honor was to be on good terms with the president.

Rabbi Sherer spent a lifetime developing his connections with dozens of powerful politicians, and he was surely not ashamed of his relationship with the president of the United States. In addition, he knew the value of being known as one who was on intimate terms with many powerful people. One wall of the corner of his office where he sat with his most important guests was covered with pictures of himself with presidents and other political luminaries. .

Nevertheless, those he chose to emphasize at the conventions were not political leaders but gedolei Torah. Therefore, a day before the convention, he instructed the staff to post stickers and cover over the photograph of himself with President Bush in over 1,000 annual reports.

This was not easy for Rav Sherer as putting out a less than perfect product was anathema to him. But in his eyes, it would have been far worse for Agudath Israel to promote itself by its association with the president rather than with gedolei Yisrael.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the bodyguard who forgot his bullets, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the bodyguard was negligent and risked the life of his clients. In a dangerous situation, no one would hire a guard with no bullets and therefore it was a mekach taus, a mistaken transaction. Therefore the guard should return the money.

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