

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE NEW SNEAKERS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha talks about the evil of Sedom. Sedom refused to do Chesed and to give tzedakah. In contrast, the nature of a Jew is to be compassionate and kind.

This leads us to the following true story.

Rabbi Segal was a third-grade Rebbe. One day, Daniel, one of his students, came to class with brand new, expensive Nike sneakers. Rabbi Segal, noticing the new sneakers, gave Daniel a compliment.

The next day Rabbi Segal noticed that Binyamin, another student, came to class with the exact same pair of new Nike sneakers. Rabbi Segal then noticed that Daniel was no longer wearing the new sneakers and was instead wearing an older pair of sneakers that were nicely polished.

Rabbi Segal approached Daniel and asked him what happened to his new sneakers, and why it was that Binyamin was wearing the same shoes that Daniel was wearing yesterday.

Daniel blushed and at first tried to evade the question. After Rabbi Segal gently persisted, Daniel finally blurted out the truth.

"I noticed that my good friend, Binyamin, has been wearing torn shoes for a long time. The soles of his



### JUST LOOK AROUND, IT'S ALL THERE

In his introduction to the laws regarding idol worship the Rambam tells us how idol worship developed. Naturally, Adam knew HaShem as well as the first generation of Adam's children. However, with the subsequent generations people's perspective on a deity began to evolve. They initially said that if HaShem placed the sun and the stars in such a position of energy we must honor them. As the generations continued this erroneous notion continued to evolve until the people attributed the power of the sun to the sun itself. They naturally worshiped it because they wanted to curry favor with these deities. This perspective became widespread and with the exception of only a handful of individuals the entire world accepted this belief system.

Avraham was no different than the rest of his generation. He was born into a family that worshiped idols and even did so himself. However, once he turned three years old he began to contemplate the world around him. He saw incredible miracles within nature. He understood that there must be a Master who guides the multiple powers that exist. Granted, the sun has power but the clouds can block the sun and the winds can move the clouds and the mountains can block the wind. In his perspective he recognized the energies of nature as a hundred musicians each one playing from their own notes different from the others and yet they were in perfect unison. Avraham concluded that there must be One great Master conducting and coordinating all these powers. He discovered HaShem.

After many years of teaching others his discovery, HaShem revealed Himself to Avraham with the command that he move away from his ancestral home and family. HaShem wanted Avraham to begin his own people that will have no connection to his past.

sneakers opened up to create a mouth and it is almost winter. I realized that Binyamin's parents were unable to afford a new pair of sneakers. When my parents recently bought me a new pair of sneakers I realized that my old sneakers were still fine, all they needed was some polish. So I polished my old ones and I offered my new pair to Binyamin. Binyamin tried them on and sure enough, they were a perfect fit. You have no idea how excited Binyamin was about the new sneakers. It was such a joy to be able to help him."

Rabbi Segal was touched and very impressed. "What did you tell your parents when you decided to give your new sneakers away?", Rabbi Segal asked.

Daniel said, "I didn't tell my parents. I made my old shoes look as good as new and my parents will never notice."

Rabbi Segal then asked, "Why didn't you give Binyamin your old shoes? Why did you have to give him your brand new ones?"

Daniel replied, "You taught us in the story of Kayin and Hevel that it's always best to give tzedakah with the best things. I didn't want to give my old shoes if I could give him my new ones".

Rabbi Segal was extremely touched by Daniel's extraordinary behavior and was moved to tears.

Later Rabbi Segal thought this story over to himself. It was clear that Daniel never told his parents that he gave away his new and expensive sneakers.

What Daniel did was very nice, but perhaps what he did was really stealing. Because Daniel was still a minor, the shoes belonged to his parents. Did Rabbi Segal have an obligation to tell Daniel's parents what he did and make sure they gave their permission?

On one hand, perhaps he should because the expensive shoes belonged to them. But on the other hand, perhaps it wasn't his business and he should not get involved. Perhaps he can assume that Daniel's parents were okay with it.

What do you think?

This question was asked to Rav Chaim Kanievsky.

See Upiryo Matok Shmos page 295



“Conflict cannot survive without your participation.”



This was the beginning of our people.

The entire Book of Bresheis is dedicated to teaching us who our forefathers were so that we should learn what our strengths and challenges are.

Avraham's initiative of contemplating the world around him was the kernel from which our people sprouted. The art of contemplation and what it produces, is a gift that was bequeathed to us from our father Avraham.

The following story reflects the echo of this art.

Rabbi Noach Weinberg met a fellow with a long ponytail approaching The Wall. He invited him to come to his Yeshiva, Aish Hatorah. The fellow asked his what a Yeshiva is. Reb Noach explained that a Yeshiva is a place where you get to

know G.D. The fellow told Reb Noach "Well, me and G.D are like this" as he twisted his two fingers together, "I don't need a Yeshiva."

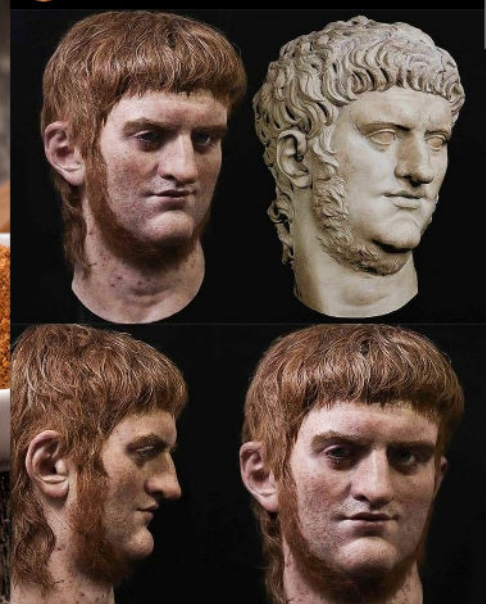
Reb Noach was intrigued. He asked the fellow how he knows that he is so close to G.D. The fellow told him how he was riding a motorcycle on a mountain road and as he turned the bend in the road there were two cars heading towards him. One was in the opposing lane and one was passing the other car in his lane! His only alternative was to go off the road which was a steep ravine. "Rabbi, my bike was destroyed and I landed in a tree with no broken bones. You see that, it's me and G.D!"

Reb Noach told him "Well my friend, just who do you think pushed you off the road? It was G.D. He was trying to tell you 'Look I am here, now get to know Me'".

I do not know how this story continued but the lesson is how important it is to contemplate everything around us including what happens to us and why it is happening.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### KINAMON, CINNAMON

A few weeks ago we learned about Myrrh, one of the ingredients of the Ketores. This week let's learn a bit about another ingredient of the Ketores, that might be more familiar to us: Kinamon, Cinnamon.

The English word cinnamon, in use in English since the fifteenth century, derives from the Greek word *kínnamon*. This Greek word was borrowed from the Hebrew word **קינמון**

Cinnamon is a spice obtained from the inner bark of the *Cinnamomum* tree (pictured top left). The delicious aroma and flavor of cinnamon come from its essential oil and principal component, cinnamaldehyde, as well as eugenol. The delicious smell of cinnamon helped to give the Ketores its delicious smell .

Cinnamon is one of the world's oldest spices. It was imported to Egypt as early as 2000 BCE. Cinnamon was so highly prized among ancient nations that it was regarded as a gift fit for monarchs. In Ancient Egypt, Egyptians used cinnamon to embalm their mummies and burned cinnamon to create a good aroma. The Romans would use cinnamon as a flavoring agent for wine.

Historically, Cinnamon was extremely expensive and was worth more than precious metals. According to Pliny the Elder, who lived around the time of Rav Yochanan Ben Zakkai, 11.5 oz of cinnamon cost as much as 1500 denarii which was the salary of fifty months of labor.

This gives us an appreciation of how much money was needed for the Cinnamon in the ketores. The ketores was made once a year and it required 9 maneh or 180 ounces of cinnamon. If 11.5 ounces is worth the salary of 50 months (4.16 years), then the 180 ounces used in the Ketores would be the equivalent of 65 years of work. Put in modern terms, if a year's salary in the US is an average of \$50,000 then 65 years' worth of wages would be \$3,250,000. This means that for the cinnamon alone used in the ketores, it cost the treasury of the Beis Hamikdash the modern equivalent of more than 3.2 million dollars. An ounce of cinnamon cost the modern equivalent of \$18,000.

This helps to clarify an interesting point in the Gemara in Krisis 6a. The Gemara says that 3 maneh, 60 ounces, of the leftover ketores ingredients were used to pay the salaries of the artisans who made the ketores. When we appreciate how much money these ingredients cost, we realize that it was a significant salary for them! For just the ounce and a half of cinnamon they got from the leftovers they made almost \$27,000. Let alone the other ingredients!

The Gemara says that the Roman Emperor Nero (pictured top right) considered destroying the Beis Hamikdash but later reconsidered. Some say he converted to Judaism. In the year 65 CE Nero's wife Poppaea Sabina died. To mourn for her, Nero made a pyre made of cinnamon sticks, and burned a year's worth of the city's supply of cinnamon at the funeral for his wife. That must have been a very expensive funeral!

Cinnamon was so valuable that we can understand that countries went to war over it. At the beginning of the 16th century, Portuguese traders arrived on the island of Ceylon, which is called Sri-Lanka today. Ceylon was the largest producer of cinnamon at the time. The Portuguese took control of the area and started their own monopoly on the spice. They established a fort on the island in 1518 and protected their control over this valuable commodity for over a hundred years. However, during the 17th century, in the Dutch-Portuguese War, the Dutch went to war with the Portuguese over the island and seized control of the island and the cinnamon monopoly.

Cinnamon is an evergreen tree characterized by oval-shaped leaves, thick bark, and a berry fruit. The cinnamon tree can grow up to 60 feet. When harvesting the spice, the bark is the primary part of the plant used.

How exactly do they harvest the Cinnamon sticks? Cinnamon is cultivated by growing the tree for two years. Then, when the cinnamon tree is around two years old, cultivators coppice, or cut back, the plant to the size of a stump and cover it with soil. This technique causes it to grow like a bush, with new shoots emerging out of the sides by the following year. It's these shoots that are used to make cinnamon. Once cut, the shoots are stripped of their bark and the peels are set out to dry in the sun. As this happens, the bark naturally curls into quills (sticks).

Cinnamon includes around 80 aromatic compounds. Cinnamon also contains a compound called coumarin which can be toxic in very large quantities.

Cinnamon flavored candies like Red Hots, Atomic Fireballs, And Hot Tamales are very spicy and hot. Is that because cinnamon is hot? Actually not. Those candies contain cinnamaldehyde, the oil that gives cinnamon its taste, but they also contain capsaicin, the compound that makes hot peppers spicy.

Today, Indonesia and China produce 70% of the world's supply of cinnamon, Indonesia producing nearly 40% and China 30%.

## WHAT MIDDAH, WILL BEST HELP YOU TO PURIFY YOUR HEARTS?

Our Sages teach that we should be modeh al haemes, and be willing to admit when we don't know something.

A Bais Yaakov teacher in a small town once invited Sarah Schenirer to attend the girls' final examination. Frau Schenirer never turned down an opportunity to participate in a special event at an out-of-town school. In the case of this important test, she knew how much joy her presence would bring to the children and what tremendous encouragement it would provide the teacher, who, as she knew, had worked so hard to prepare her pupils. The parents, too, would shep nachas from their young daughters. Above all, the teacher wanted Frau Schenirer to enjoy the children's intelligent answers, for that would make her proud of her Bais Yaakov girls. Indeed, it was a real joy to hear the cute little girls answering the questions with such confidence. The children relaxed after their successful performance. Beaming mothers hugged their daughters. The greatest satisfaction and happiness, however, were those visible on the face of Frau Schenirer as she observed the teacher questioning and the children answering properly. Her joy and nachas knew no limit. Then the children began dancing. A moment later, Frau Schenirer and their teacher joined in. All burst into a lively rendition of Frau Schenirer's favorite song, "Vetaher Libeinu."

This completed, Frau Schenirer heartily thanked the children for their successful performance and presented them with her own question: "Tell me, girls," she asked with a charming smile. "You just sang 'Ve-taher Libeinu.' 'Purify our hearts.' So tell me: what virtue, what middah, will best help you to purify your hearts?" "Yiras Shamayim," came the first answer. "Chessed." "Be nice to your friends." "Respect your parents and teachers." "Love your teachers, friends, and neighbors."

One little girl said nothing. Frau Schenirer turned to her: "What do you think?" "I don't know," the girl answered, embarrassed.

"You are quite right," Frau Schenirer said, kissing and hugging the child. "You've told us the greatest truth. It's man's noblest virtue to say, 'I don't know.' After learning, acquiring, searching, reading all the worthy seforim, listening to great scholars, drawing from the well of exalted minds, absorbing the wisdom of our geonim, trying to emulate them, striving to follow their ways .. if after all that one can say 'I don't know' as humble, as innocently as you just did, that's the highest madreigah that man can use to attain a pure heart."

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### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question Rabbi Tzvi Berkowitz said that this Halacha is discussed in Bava Metzia 9B.

Rabbi Shuchatowitz answered that Avraham, the one who went to the bookstore, took the books for his friend. Only after the books were paid for did he think that he could keep it. Since at the time of the money transfer he took it for his friend, the friend gets the books.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of the recovery of our mechutensta

**Mrs. Suzette Munk**

May her recovery be complete

and in honor of the engagement of our grandson

**Dovid Nissel to Sarah Leah Klainberg**

May they merit to build a bayis ne'aman b'Yisroel

By Neil and Phyllis Nissel

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