

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE SMORGASBORD

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha talks about Matan Torah, the Giving of the Torah. Our Sages teach that one who benefits from the banquet of a chasan and kallah will be zoche to receive more Torah.

This leads us to the following story.

The Friedman family were blessed to marry off their daughter. The wedding was large and beautiful and the food was delicious. However, after the wedding several people became sick with food poisoning.

They complained to the caterer and the caterer promised that he would investigate it. It turned out that the fish in the sushi was spoiled and that was causing the food poisoning. The caterer felt really terrible. He called up the Friedmans and told them that he took full responsibility for the food poisoning. In order to make it up to them, he said he was going to set aside \$20,000 to compensate anyone at the wedding who got sick. If the Friedmans could give him a list of the guests who got sick, the money would be divided among them.

MIND THE GAP

Our Sages teach us that the reason HaShem chose Mount Sinai to be the location where He gave the Torah to His people was because it was smaller than the other more significant mountains. The Sages go on to teach us that Torah is given to those who are humble. Throughout our holy books there is tremendous emphasis placed on the importance of humility. There are many other fine qualities that we should adopt, why is humility placed ahead of those other qualities?

It must be clarified that humility should in no way be confused with poor self-worth or low self-esteem. The latter is detrimental to the health of a person and certainly of the Jew. HaShem is not interested in having a nation of people who do not believe in themselves. Quite to the contrary; He wants a nation whose people are driven to become great and to make a difference in the world. This can only be accomplished by people who believe in themselves. So then what is humility?

Humility is recognizing one's true self worth. When a wealthy fellow whose financial worth is \$40 million dollars stands next to the other members of his shul, he feels real good about himself. When he attends a convention where the smallest folks are worth over \$200 million he feels quite small. The question is how does he view himself when he is by himself? What is his real self worth? Is his self worth only through comparison or does he have an actual self worth?

The people of HaShem do not measure themselves in terms of financial worth or in terms of academic accomplishments. We measure ourselves in terms of our relationship with HaShem. That relationship is what defines us. It is who we are.

“We are called to
unity,
not uniformity.”



The Friedmans' were grateful for the caterer's gracious offer. They sent out an email to all of the guests that said that any guest who got sick from the food should contact them, because the caterer was going to compensate them.

Shortly after the email went out, Mr Friedman got a knock at his door one evening. The man at the door introduced himself as Berel Klein. Berel said, "I heard that you are arranging compensation for anyone who ate the fish at the wedding and got sick. I ate the fish and I got food poisoning. I actually still feel its effects. Can you please add me to the list to receive compensation?"

Mr. Friedman said that he was happy to help, he just wanted to get some more information. "Mr. Klein, I don't think we have met, are you from the Chasson's side of the family?"

Mr Klein said, "The truth is I am neither from the chosson or the kallah's side of the family. I go to all the weddings in the area every night to collect tzedakah. Helping the poor at a wedding is a huge zechus and I help to give this zechus to everyone at their weddings. While I was at your wedding I ate some sushi at the smorgasbord and I got sick like the others.

Mr. Friedman listened to Berel and wasn't sure what to reply. This man was not an invited guest and was a tzedakah collector. It's true that the caterer was going to compensate anyone who got sick, but would that also apply to a tzedakah collector that was not on the list of guests?

On one hand perhaps he should not have eaten from the food and should not be compensated. On the other hand, however, it is usually expected that tzedakah collectors and other uninvited people will eat from the smorgasbord and even the main meal. In addition, the caterer said he would compensate anyone who was harmed by the food, and Berel was harmed. Perhaps he should get compensated?

What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Shemos 227

There are many types of relationships; parents/child, teacher/student, siblings, peers, employer/employee and so on. We can identify two types of relationships; equal relationships and unequal relationships. Parent/child is unequal while peers or equal. For a relationship to be successful both parties must recognize whether their relationship is equal or unequal. It is also important to recognize the gap of that inequality. A healthy parent/child relationship will require that the child recognize how much greater his father is than he. If this 10 year old considers his father as being just a bit more mature than himself it will be a lopsided relationship. Our relationship with HaShem is certainly unequal. Let us then consider the gap of inequality between us and HaShem.

We are His creation and He is our Creator. He created the heavens which contain between 100 to 200 billion galaxies and each galaxy contains hundreds of billions of stars. If we can imagine squeezing the entire universe into the space between the Earth and the moon, Earth itself would be microscopic!

If we were to now calculate the gap of inequality we would be almost non-existent. However, we know that HaShem created the universe for the Jewish people. HaShem created it all for me and my people. On one hand this recognition raises my self worth extremely high but at the same time I must recognize the tremendous gap between myself and Him. An honest understanding of the gap will erase any other measure of significance. I am only a Jew; my entire self worth is only that HaShem cares for me.

The mountain upon which HaShem gave us the Torah must have no distinction other than it is the mountain of HaShem. It can have no other self worth. If it is also known as the tallest mountain or the widest mountain then it has a self worth outside of being the mountain of HaShem. Such a mountain cannot become the mountain of HaShem.

Perhaps the primacy of humility is that only with humility can HaShem endow us with the relationship which allows us to receive His Torah.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

QUARTZ

This week my wife and daughter went for a hike. My daughter came back with a bunch of fascinating rocks that she found. One of them was a large quartz. Let us discuss the fascinating qualities of Quartz.

Quartz is a hard, crystalline mineral composed of one part silicon and two parts oxygen. Quartz grows in a crystalline structure – that is, it forms in a predictable pattern. Quartz is the second most abundant mineral in Earth's continental crust, behind feldspar. Since ancient times, varieties of quartz have been the most commonly used minerals in the making of jewelry and hardstone carvings. There are many different varieties of quartz, several of which are semi-precious gemstones. In fact, Amethyst, Onyx, Jasper and Tiger's eye are just colored varieties of Quartz. Quartz alone is a colorless transparent to opaque material. Extra elements added to the silicon and oxygen add color to quartz in nature. For example, Amethyst is quartz that has been colored with other minerals, including iron.

What is the meaning of the word quartz? The word "quartz" is derived from the Czech term which means hard. This is because Quartz is a very hard mineral, pretty close to the hardness of diamond. Because of its hardness, Quartz was also used in ancient times, in Ireland, as well as many other countries, to make stone tools.

You likely have heard of a quartz watch or clock. This means that the clock's time is partially powered by the quartz inside. But did you know that many electronics use quartz? Radios, televisions, microphones, robotics, timers, buzzers, watches, lasers, microscopes, telescopes, electronic sensors, scientific instruments, electronic games, computers, cell phones, electronic meters, GPS equipment, electronic communications equipment, inkjet printing, high voltage electricity, electronic drums and many more electronic components and devices use quartz crystals.

But how does this work? How can an inert rock generate electricity? This is because Quartz crystals have special "piezoelectric properties". This means they develop an electric potential upon the application of mechanical stress. It will vibrate when you put electricity into it, or it will give out electricity when you vibrate it. The word piezoelectric comes from Greek words that mean "electricity that comes from pressure". Quartz's piezoelectric properties were discovered by Jacques and Pierre Curie in

1880.

How exactly does quartz power a watch? A quartz watch is battery-powered. The watch uses a low-frequency, tiny piece of quartz crystal shaped like a tuning fork. That quartz crystal serves as the oscillator. The battery sends electricity to the quartz crystal through an electronic circuit. The quartz oscillator vibrates quickly and with a precise frequency of exactly 32,768 times a second in response to the electronic charge. When the piece of quartz vibrates, it generates an electrical voltage. A second circuit on the microchip detects this "output voltage" (fluctuating 32,768 times a second) and divides its frequency to produce once-a-second pulses that drive the motor powering the gears. The pulses drive the small motor that spins the watch's hands – offering accurate time measurement.

Large amounts of quartz sand (also known as silica sand) are used in the manufacture of glass, and to make specialized lenses, windows and filters.

Because it contains pure silicon, quartz is also used to make semiconductors and many computer components.

By the 1930s, the electronics industry had become dependent on quartz crystals. But the only source of suitable crystals was Brazil; however, World War II disrupted the supplies from Brazil, so scientists figured out how to make artificial, synthetic quartz on a commercial scale. By the 1950s, hydrothermal synthesis techniques were producing synthetic quartz crystals on an industrial scale.

How is quartz artificially made? The hydrothermal method uses a large autoclave, which is an electrically heated, pressure-sealed container that is 3 meters or more in height. The autoclave contains an aqueous solution of sodium carbonate or hydroxide. Small fragments of quartz are placed on the bottom as the source material. The upper portion of the container is a cage supporting numerous small seed crystals of quartz. When the temperature is raised to about 400 degrees centigrade, the quartz fragments dissolve and crystallize onto the seeds in the cooler upper portion of the container.

Today virtually all the quartz crystal used in the modern electronics industry is synthetic and produced by the hydrothermal process. However, synthetic crystals are less prized for use as gemstones.

THE NER TAMID

On November 10, 1938, the day after the infamous Kristallnacht riots all throughout Germany, a group of truncheon-wielding Gestapo agents burst into the home of Rabbi Michel Munk zt'l, Rav of the K'hal Adas Yisroel Synagogue in Berlin and dragged him outside. Together with other communal leaders in Berlin, they were summoned to the ruins of the once magnificent synagogue, which had been set aflame and burnt to the ground.

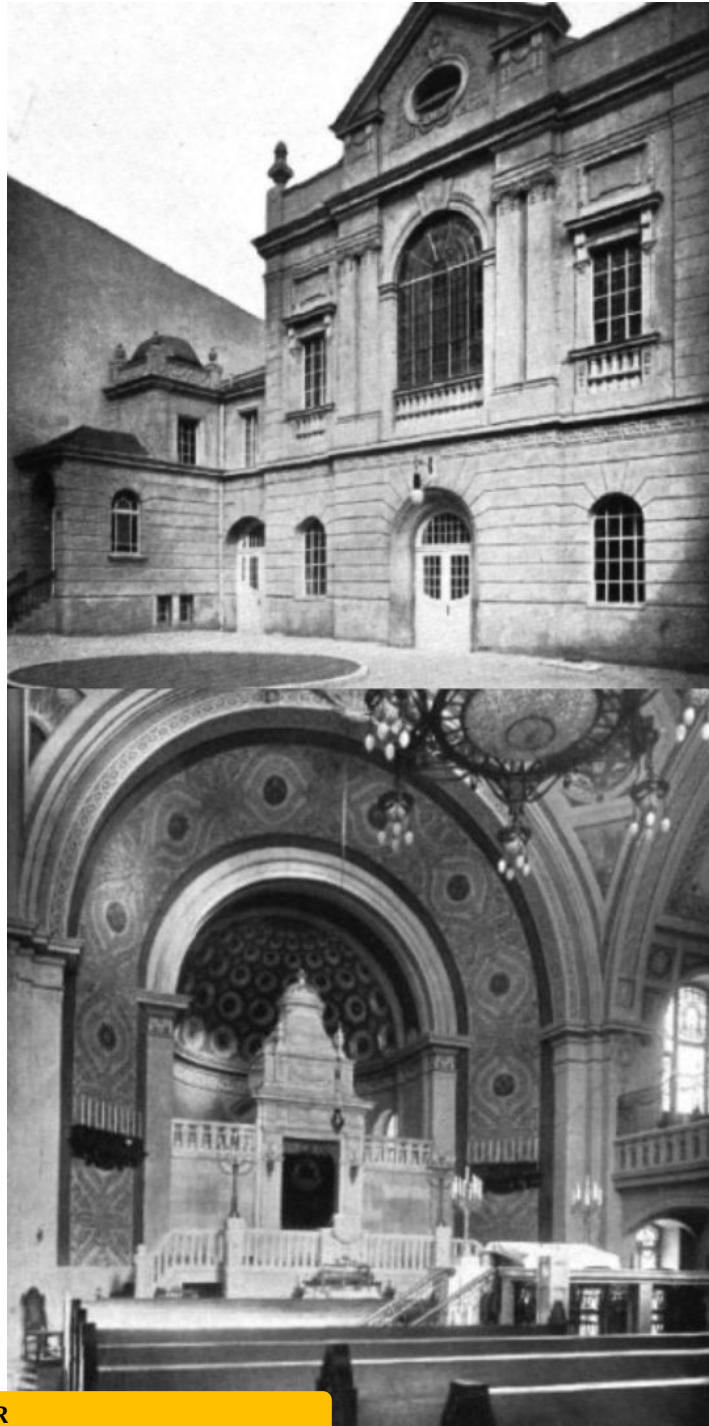
What Rav Munk and the others saw was utter devastation. The Aron Hakodesh was incinerated, there were gaping holes in the walls, and the entire electrical system of the synagogue was destroyed by the fire.

Suddenly, they saw a glow at one end of the destruction. It was the Ner Tamid, with its own battery, which had escaped the looting, to cast a glow over the synagogue.

The Nazi was amazed and asked Rav Munk what that light was. He replied, "This is our Ner Tamid - our Eternal Light".

The German looked at him with hatred in his eyes. "You cursed Jews, *Ihr Juden seit ein unverstliches volk - You Jews are indestructible people!*

Pictured: The K'hal Adas Yisroel Synagogue in Berlin



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the employee, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the owner should say, "Leaving might be a good idea, but you should ask for a second opinion because I am not sure." The owner can not simply say that the employee should go because that is to the advantage of the owner, not the employee.

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