

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE CAMERA SYSTEM

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha mentions the Chasida, the stork. Our Sages teach that the stork was called "the kind one" because they care for each other. This leads us to the following true story.

There were once two neighbors Meir and Avraham, who shared a duplex with a large driveway. There was a problem of car thefts in the area. One day, Meir asked Avraham if he would agree to install a security camera system, and split the costs.

"I'm going to pass", Avraham said. "I don't believe that security cameras prevent thefts. I have the money for this, but I just don't see it as a priority."

So Meir went ahead and installed the security camera system on his own. The system and installation cost \$3000. Again Meir asked Avraham if he would split the costs, but Avraham declined.

Sure enough, a year later Avraham's car was stolen from in front of the house. The police did an investigation but they gave up on recovering



REB CHAIM & THE KEDUSHA WITHIN

This Shabbos we will read Parshas Para, the additional Parsha of the Red Heifer. This Parsha teaches us the many laws that relate to tumas meis, the impurity that comes from the body of a Jew who has died. The Parsha opens with the introductory statement; "This is the Law of the Torah." The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh asks how are these laws The Laws of the Torah any more than the laws regarding other mitzvos? Just as the Parsha of the korban Pesach opens with "These are the laws of the Pesach", this Parsha should open with "These are the laws of Tuma".

The Ohr Hachaim asks further why does the tumah of a Jewish body cause so much more tumah, spiritual impurity, than the body of a non-Jew?

What is tuma? HaShem places Kedusha in the world which drives the world in a direction which leads it to its fulfillment. Tumah is the energy that leads the world in the opposite direction. (It must be stated that in spite of its running in the opposite direction, tumah too, is a creation of HaShem as everything else in the world. There is no existence outside of Him.)

Everything in this world draws its existence from HaShem. He is the source of all life. Tumah, as well, draws its energy from sources of Kedusha. However, when a particular item has active Kedusha within it, the tumah cannot enter. The Kedusha within rejects the tuma. However once the Kedusha exits its place of residence, a small residue of Kedusha remains. It is this residual Kedusha which attracts the tumah.

Let us apply this as it relates to our discussion. A Jew is a receptacle that is capable of containing tremendous Kedusha. The Kedusha it is capable of retaining is of the highest order. Just as the first set of Luchos, the Tablets upon which HaShem etched the Ten Com-

the car.

Avraham sheepishly asked Meir if he could give over the camera footage to the investigators to help them find the car. Meir said, "I will give it to you only on condition that you agree to pay me \$1500 to split the cost of the system. You said you didn't need the security system, but now that you are needing it, and now that you are using it, you need to pay me."

Avraham was of course frustrated. Avraham said, "You have a mitzvah of Hashavas Aveida to help me find my stolen car. You can't charge me for that. You have an obligation to help me. You are extorting me".

But Meir replied, "You said you didn't need it but now that you need it, please split the cost."

Later Meir felt a bit guilty about not sharing the footage. Did he have an obligation to share it if his neighbor would not pay for it?

What do you think? On one hand it looks like Meir has an obligation to help his friend. It also looks like he is extorting his friend, in his time of great need.

But on the other hand, Meir paid a lot of money for the system. Why should Avraham benefit from it, if he refused to pay for it?

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Regarding last week's question about whether a dentist should miss the mitzva of megillah in order to help a person who is in great pain, Rav Zilberstien writes that it seems that he would be obligated to help the person, because ignoring the person would be violating a torah mitzva of Lo Samod Al Dam, Reacha, of not being passive when a fellow's blood is being spilled. One cannot do an aveira in order to do a mitzva derabanan of Megillah. He concludes that this is a "Tzarich Iyun".



Difficult times have helped me to understand better than before, how infinitely rich and beautiful life is in every way, and that so many things that one goes worrying about are of no importance whatsoever.

mandments, contained within themselves the Word of HaShem, so is the Jew able to become the container of the Word of HaShem. A non-Jew, by contrast, is not able to contain that level of Kedusha. Therefore, when a Jew dies and his body is no longer a viable receptacle, the Kedusha that departs leaves a strong residual Kedusha. It is enough to nourish the tuma with its needs and so the tuma comes to it. Whereas, when the non-Jew passes from his body the residual Kedusha is much less and attracts much less tuma.

In order for us to understand why the Jew is so different, the Parsha introduces these laws saying that this is the nature of the Torah. Torah is the vehicle by which a Jew can ascend to the spiritual heights of the greatest Kedusha. The Torah is teaching us that the cause for the greater tuma is due to the Torah through which the Jew is able to ascend.

It is difficult to refer to Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt'l as a human being because his very essence transcended human limitations. He sanctified himself through and through with continuous uninterrupted

connection to the Torah.

We all have a neshama whose essence is the breath of HaShem - pure and totally disconnected from material limitations. Our neshamos are tethered to this world through the material body. Although our neshama's home is out of this world, nevertheless, she is tethered here. Almost all people train their neshama to be at home in this material world and we succeed at that. However, if we pay close attention to her needs and always give her what she wants, we will find ourselves limiting our interaction with the material world greatly.

Reb Chaim lived his life tending to all the desires of his neshama. He even protected her by not letting anything enter his eyes that did not contain Kedusha. He avoided looking at street signs because why should he bring them into his being - there is nothing of Kedusha in them!

Our Sages teach us that the great people of our nation provide protection to the people of their generation. Now that Reb Chaim has left us, how much we must turn to HaShem and request His support and guidance that we so badly need.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and may we see the arrival of Moshiach which Reb Chaim so longingly awaited.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE SHAFAN, HYRAX

This week's Parsha talks about the animals that have only one siman, one sign of being kosher. The Torah lists the Camel, the Hare, the Pig and the Shafan. What is a Shafan?

The Artscroll chumash as well as Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's chumash translate it as a Hyrax. Rabbi Kaplan quotes the opinion of the Malbim, that a shafan is a Rock Badger, also called a Rock Hyrax, which is one of the five main species of Hyrax. So it seems that there is a general consensus that the shafan is a type of Hyrax.

But what exactly is a hyrax? Let's learn about this fascinating creature.

The Hyrax, particularly the Rock Hyrax is a species that is native to Eretz Yisrael, as well as Jordan, Lebanon, and the Arabian Peninsula.

Hyraxes look similar to marmots and large squirrels, but they are actually more closely related to elephants and sea cows. Hyraxes have a lifespan of 9 to 14 years.

Hyraxes are unique in a number of ways. Even though they are mammals, they do not internally regulate their body temperature like most warm blooded animals. Rather they use behavioral thermoregulation, like huddling together and basking in the sun to keep their body at an ideal temperature.

The Torah calls the Hyrax a maleh gera, a ruminant, an animal that regurgitates and chews its cud. Hyraxes are unique in several ways regarding the way they chew. Unlike most other browsing and grazing animals, they do not use the incisors at the front of the jaw for slicing off leaves and grass. Rather, they use the molar teeth at the side of the jaw to cut grass. They chew in a side-to-side way much like cows. The hyrax's wide mouth and sharp teeth enable it to take large bites of grass and quickly fill its mouth. Eating rapidly and spending less time on open grazing land lessens its exposure to predators. Hyraxes chew for a long time, even when they rest, in a way that is similar to chewing their cud.

In addition, similar to animals that chew their cud, hyraxes have complex, multi-chambered stomachs that allow bacteria to break down tough plant materials. These unique eating and chewing characteristics are included in what the Torah calls Maleh Gera. (Rabbi Arye Kaplan)

The two upper incisors of a hyrax are large and tusk-like, and grow continuously through life. The tusks of hyraxes develop from the incisor teeth, in the same way as the tusks of elephants. These tusks can inflict fatal wounds.

Unlike gophers and other rodents, hyraxes do not construct dens, rather they find shelter in existing holes. These holes can greatly vary in size and configuration.

Since they live in rocky terrain across the Middle East and need to quickly climb up steep, rocky surfaces, Hashem gave them special

feet. Their feet have rubbery pads with numerous sweat glands. These help the animal maintain its grip when quickly moving up steep, rocky surfaces. In addition, Hashem gave them the ability to retract up the center portion of their feet into a concave dome. This creates a vacuum-like suction on solid surfaces. It's like having suction cups on their feet which aids in their climbing ability.

Hashem also designed them with very efficient kidneys that help to retain water so that they can better survive in their dry environments.

Since they live in sunny areas, Hashem gave them a built-in sun visor in their eyes. Hyraxes are unique in that their iris slightly protrudes over the pupil of their eye. This decreases the amount of light to the eye from above like a sun visor.

When hyraxes make noises for territory and defense, it can be very startling. Some scientists have likened them to a screaming woman!

Hyraxes are eaten by leopards, eagles, mongooses, lions, and jackals. In fact, the Verreaux eagle feeds almost exclusively on them.

There is an interesting etymological and historical connection between the hyrax, the shafan, and the land of Spain. Some linguists suggest that the word Hispania, or Spain comes from the Hebrew word Shafania, meaning the land of the Shafan. Greek and Roman leaders associated Spain with hyraxes or rabbits. Some historians believe that at the time Spain either had an abundant hyrax population or small buck-toothed mammals about the size of rabbits. Rock hyraxes are present throughout many parts of north Africa to this day, so there is a likelihood they populated parts of Spain in antiquity.

Another suggestion from linguists is that Espania comes from the Hebrew word Tzafona, "to the north", meaning the land north of the north African coast.

However the Abarbanel, (Pirush Al Nevi'im Rishonim, end of Melachim II) who was a main finance minister to Queen Isabella of Spain in the 15th century, gave the following explanation to the name Spain. Around the time of Nevuchadnetzar, around 500 BCE, a King named Heracles who was Greek, ruled over a kingdom on the coast of Spain. Heracles later renounced his throne in preference for his native Greece, and he left his kingdom to his nephew, Espan. The country España, or Spain then took its name from its king Espan. It was around this time that Jews from the shevatim Yehudah, Benyamin, Shimon and Levi were first brought to Spain, by a Greek leader named Phiros who was allied with Nevuchadnetzar. The Jewish captives were responsible for the development of the cities of Lucena and Toledo, and these names were chosen by the Jews.

THE HOLY ROOM CLEANERS

We just finished the Yom Tov of Purim. Please enjoy this beautiful Purim story.

Rav Manis Mandel was the beloved principal of Yeshiva of Brooklyn. He was also known as a special tzadik. The following story gives us a peek at his greatness.

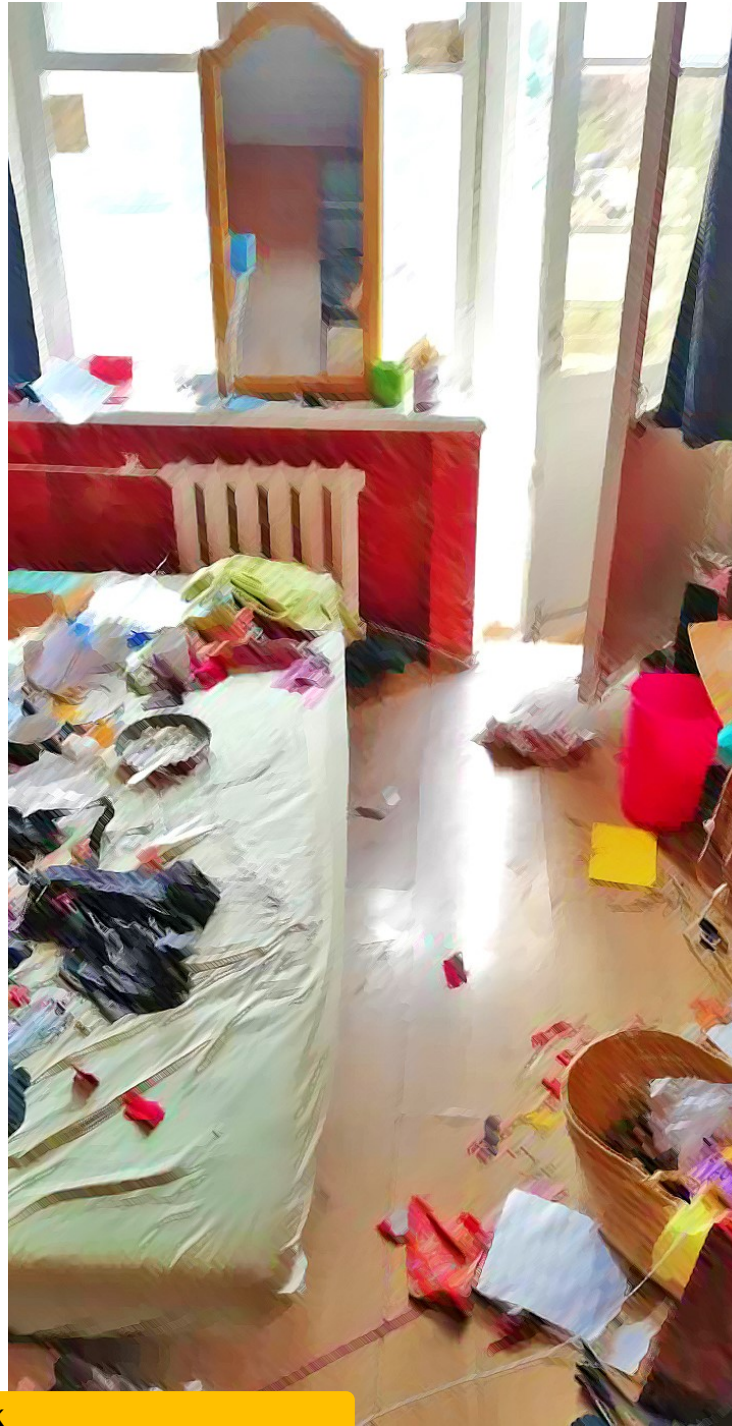
In Williamsburg years ago, there was a strange fellow who lived alone and relied on the kindness of others to survive. Sadly his hygiene left something to be desired, and he walked around with old dirty clothes and he smelled.

One Purim in the middle of their seudah, with their table surrounded with their children and guests, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Mandel excused themselves to their children and guests and quietly left the house for a while.

No one knew where the holy couple went in the middle of the seudah. But after a while, the secret got out.

The Mandels knew that this poor fellow was out soliciting tzedakah for himself, on Purim. They, therefore, took the opportunity to secretly go to his apartment to change his linen, and clean his rooms.

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



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The printing of this week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of our dear mother, grandmother and great grandmother
Mrs. Eleanor Kolinsky, z'l
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May the merit of hundreds and hundreds of Shabbos tables graced with beautiful Shabbos conversations be a zechus for the aliyah of her neshama.

Rosalyn and Franklyn Snitow and family

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