

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE OFFICE SUMMIT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha discusses the mitzvah to eat kosher food. This leads us to the following true story.

David was the CEO of a large technology company in Israel. One day the company was planning a company-wide summit celebrating its accomplishments over the last year. It would be a catered event. All of the attendees at the summit were Jewish but not religious.

David got quotes from a few different kosher caterers for the affair. One caterer who had a hechsher and was perfectly kosher according to all opinions, but was not mehadrin, not the highest standard of kashrus, charged 30 shekels a plate. Another caterer,



INDEPENDENCE DAY IS APPROACHING

Every seven years when we had the Beis HaMikdash, and in the near future as well, may it so be the Will of HaShem, the entire nation of Israel, every member of every family converged on the Temple Mount and witnessed the following scene. In the middle of the courtyard of the Mikdash the King of Israel, a descendant of Kings Dovid and Shlomo would read aloud in a voice that was clear and loud, articulate and heard by all, selected parts of the Torah. Naturally, it were those parts of the Torah that were relevant for every member of our nation to hear. The Parsha we will read this week, Kedoshim, was one of those selected Parshios.

With all ears attentive they heard the King (they will hear the King) read "Be holy, for I, HaShem your G.D, am Holy."

It is no wonder that this Parsha was chosen to be read at Hakheil. These few words give our nation the direction and guidance by which we have lived for the past 100 generations and by which we will reach our destiny.

Everything we do, all of our life's endeavors, be they in raising our families or educating our children, pursuing business opportunities or building communal institutions. Everything our nation is involved in is to be imbued with our striving to be holy.

What is holiness? In one word, 'Holiness' is 'purpose'. When we dedicate all

who had a mehadrin hechsher which had the highest kashrus standard available, charged 50 shekels a plate for the exact same food.

David thought to himself, "No one at the event will be concerned about the kashrus. Should I spend the extra twenty shekels a head for the mehadrin hechsher? Maybe I should indeed provide all of these Jews with the best possible level of kashrus."

But then he thought that maybe he could use the cheaper caterer and use the saved money to buy each of the employees at the event a nice siddur that was designed for beginners as a memento of the event. Perhaps the siddur would have a deeper impact on the attendees than the more expensive, higher kashrus standard of the caterer?

David brought this question to Rav Zilberstien.

Should he pay for the highest level of kashrus, or should he use the acceptable level of kashrus and use the extra money to buy everyone a siddur?

What do you think?

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of our endeavors for the single purpose of sanctifying the Name of HaShem we are approaching holiness.

HaShem created Man unique among all the other creatures. All creatures from the mineral world, from the plant world and from the animal world are bound by the laws of nature that HaShem designated for them. The lion must kill for his meal and the cows must eat grass. No creature has free will, each is bound by their respective laws that govern them.

Man, on the other hand, although he too has laws of nature that govern him, was endowed with the capability to shatter those shackles. Although Man may have a tendency to attack, to steal, to cheat and to lie in certain circumstances, he has the ability to control that nature. Man is the only creature who has true freedom. He can allow his intellect

to control his actions and reject his nature.

The only thing Man is missing to be truly free is the direction and guidance of what is the correct choice and conduct. While there are some axioms of what is good and what is evil, nevertheless, it is impossible for a mortal being to be able to properly discern true Goodness. This is why our Sages teach that only one who studies Torah is the free man. Although everybody has freedom, those who are not studying Torah will not be able to access the Torah's guidance; they will be bound by the natural laws just as all other creatures are bound.

Perhaps the reason Kedoshim is read during the Omer as we prepare for Shavuot is because Kedoshim places the Torah in the context of providing us independence from our bondage from our natural and physical limitations.

May we all find success in preparing ourselves in these coming weeks for the Jewish Day of Independence.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

STEAM

Last week we learned about smoke. This week let's explore steam, a substance that can sometimes look like smoke, (for example when you are driving on the highway passing a power plant,) but is really very different.

Steam is simply water in the gas phase. We know that water has three states: Ice is the solid state, water vapor is the gaseous state, and water is the liquid state. When water is heated it evaporates, which means it turns into water vapor and expands. At 100 Celsius it boils, thus rapidly evaporating. At boiling point, the invisible gas of steam is created. The opposite of evaporation is condensation, which is when water vapor condenses back into tiny droplets of water.

Last week we discussed how smoke can have several constructive uses. But the constructive use of steam, even today, is far more widespread. In fact, steam power accounts for between about 80% to 90% of the electricity generated in the world today.

Most steam power generators today are one of two types: fossil fuel power plants, or nuclear power plants. How is steam used in a coal or a nuclear power plant? Coal and Nuclear power heat up water, to create steam. Steam can create an enormous amount of pressure. The moving steam pushes giant blades (Picture 1) mounted on a rotor shaft. The force of the steam on the blades spins and rotates the rotor shaft of a generator. The generator, in turn, converts the mechanical (kinetic) energy of the spinning rotor to electrical energy.

The steam engine was invented by the Scottish inventor James Watt (Pic. 2) in 1781. Watts, the unit of power, (as in a 100-watt bulb) was named after him. In addition to being a brilliant inventor, Watt was a savvy businessman. He marketed his machine by calculating the number of horses his engine would replace. He, therefore, coined the term "horsepower" in the process. The industrial revolution was a direct result of the invention of the steam engine.

Soon after, steam-powered road vehicles (Pic. 3) were invented in England. Then came the steam locomotive and then the steam-powered ship. (Pic. 4)

Interestingly, French aviation pioneer Gustave de Ponton d'Ame-court built a steam-driven model helicopter in 1863. He was the one who coined the word 'helicopter'. (Pic. 5)

The first motorcycles were actually steam-powered velocipedes made in France in 1867. (Pic. 6)

In many cases when steam is used to generate electricity, the steam is converted back into water and not used again. However, there is something called cogeneration where steam is piped into buildings through a district heating system to provide heat energy after its use in the electric generation cycle.

The world's biggest steam generation system is the New York City steam system. It is actually larger than the next nine systems combined. First introduced in 1882, and still in use today, this system pumps steam into 100,000 buildings in Manhattan from seven cogeneration plants. So in that case, not only does the steam create electricity, but it also is then used to heat buildings.

In modern times the steam system is promoting the use of steam for cooling in the summer months as well. This is accomplished with something called absorption chillers. This is a refrigerator that uses a heat source like steam to provide the energy needed to drive the cooling process. This is an example of trigeneration.

As an aside, the steam system is the reason why you see clouds of condensation vented out of manholes in Manhattan. (Pic. 7) Steam can also be used in many other ways as well.

Steam is used in ironing clothes to add enough humidity with the heat to take wrinkles out and put intentional creases into the clothing. Steam is used in the home, to cook vegetables. (Pic. 8)

Steam is used in the cleaning of fibers and other materials. Steam is also useful in melting hardened grease and oil residues and is used in cleaning kitchen floors and equipment. Among the advantages of using steam versus a hot water spray are the facts that steam can operate at higher temperatures and requires much less water per minute.

Since steam is a non-toxic antimicrobial agent it is used to sterilize instruments for surgery. An autoclave, a machine that uses steam under pressure, is used in hospitals and microbiology laboratories and similar environments for sterilization. (Pic. 9)

The next time you see steam rising out of a pot, take a moment to appreciate how many ways Hashem has blessed us with this apparently simple creation.

THE HERO OF THE FIRE OF THE 1895 BRISK FIRE

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik's dedication to the people of his city was expressed poignantly the day a great fire swept through Brisk in 1895.

As was the norm in those days, most buildings in the city were made of wood, and when a fire began in one house, the flames spread quickly to the rest. There was little hope to put out the flames, and the main concern was to make sure no one remained trapped in the houses.

During the fire that swept the city, almost like a modern-day firefighter, Rav Chaim ran from house to house frantically searching for anyone still inside. He found many little children, and, charging through the smoke and flames, he led them to safety. He made many trips in and out of the danger zone, carrying infants in his arms, and did not stop until he was sure all were accounted for.

When the fire finally came under control it was discovered that half the homes in the city had been destroyed, and many families were left without a roof over their heads. Those whose homes had been destroyed moved into the shuls and other public buildings, and a committee was established to build new houses for the many homeless. In the meantime, while the construction of new homes was still going on, Rav Chaim refused to sleep in a bed, but rather slept on a hard wooden bench. He said he was unable to sleep on a bed while others in the city had no homes.

After a while, Rav Chaim sensed that the people in the city who did have homes were becoming lax in their efforts to rebuild the city. This was not acceptable to Rav Chaim so he moved out of his house and went to sleep in a small room under the stairwell in the Great Synagogue of Brisk. His congregants pleaded with him that this was beneath his dignity and that he should return home, but their arguments were unsuccessful. Seeing they had no other choice, Rav Chaim's move to sleep in the shul had the desired effect, and the pace of rebuilding quickened, and in short time the houses were rebuilt.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the chicken order, Rav Zilberstein answered as follows: Regarding the reimbursement of the payment for the whole order, as well as the payment for his work, he should be reimbursed and paid in full. This is because when they sent him they all agreed to send him in an unrefrigerated van so the driver was not liable for that. However for the payment of the fine, the driver is responsible for that because he caused it.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of our son Benjamin.

May the zechus of gracing hundreds and hundreds of Shabbos tables with beautiful conversation be a merit for him to grow in Torah learning and Yiras Shamayim.

By Eugene and Marina Vurgaftman

