

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



## WORLD WIDE TRAVELS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week we will be commemorating Ma'amad Har Sinai, standing at Har Sinai when we received the Torah. Our Sages teach that when the Jewish people stood at Har Sinai, everyone was miraculously healed from their illnesses. This leads us to the following true story.

One day Donny, who was in his late thirties, came to the doctor. He wasn't feeling well for a while and wanted to get things checked out. The doctor asked him questions and then ordered some tests. He told Donny that he would call when the results came in.

About a week later, Donny got a call from the doctor. "Donny, have you ever traveled the world? Have you ever seen the wonders of the African plains? Or the beauty of the Amazon?" Donny replied, "No, but why are you asking me this? Are you becoming a tour guide?"

"No Donny", the doctor said, "but your test results came back with dire news. It looks like you have a rare terminal illness. You only have six months to live. I would recommend that you stop what you are doing and travel the world



## THE TALE OF TWO LEAVES

Inspired by Rabbi Naftoli Hexter

The holiday of Shavu'os, celebrating our receiving of HaShem's Torah, celebrates much more than our new acquisition. The Torah itself is much more than the wisdom of HaShem, it is the glue by which we are able to attach ourselves to Him.

Our Sages teach that the only way a person's Torah study will have a lasting effect is if his fear of sinning precedes his Torah study. In other words, before one can hope for success in their Torah study they must first have fear of doing anything not in line with HaShem's Will. The reason for this is because the only value of Torah is that it connects us to our Source. The one wishing to attach themselves to HaShem will certainly avoid anything that would cause him to be rejected by HaShem. The one who does not care if he transgresses the Will of HaShem evidently does not wish to connect. With respect to the latter, no matter how much Torah he has studied it will not be able to have its desired effect.

Before we study Torah we recite a bracha as we do before performing any mitzvah. Immediately following that bracha we recite a second bracha in which we express our gratitude for being chosen by HaShem to be His people and for giving us His Torah. The function of this bracha is to underscore our understanding that the primary function of the Torah is for us to become and to remain the people chosen by HaShem.

This reminds me of the story of two leaves. There were once two leaves situated

with the time you have left”.

Donny was extremely shocked at the news. He trusted his doctor and sold his business, sold much of his assets, bought a boat, and embarked on a world tour to visit as many cities as he could before he left the world.

While on his world wide travels, as Donny got closer to the six-month date, he wondered about his prognosis because he still felt quite fine. Finally, the six month date came and Donny was completely healthy. A full year passed and Donny was totally fine. He realized that there must have been a huge error.

Donny made his way back home and made an appointment with his doctor.

At the appointment, Donny told his doctor that he felt completely fine and that it was already six months past the time he was told he had left.

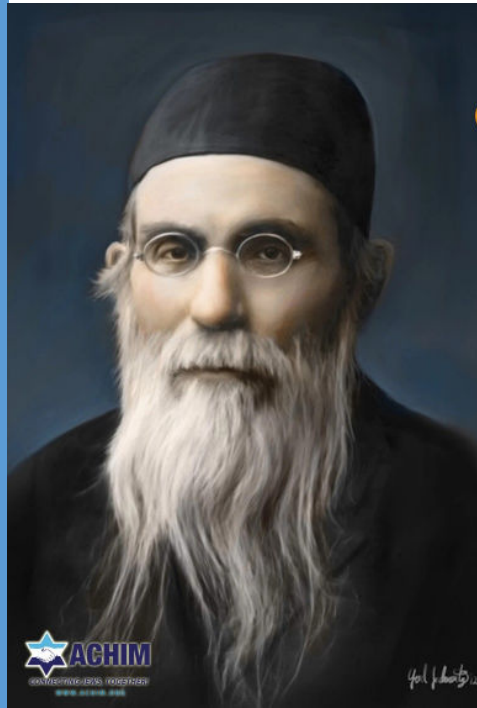
The doctor excused himself for a minute to retrieve the files from Donny's test results. The doctor came back white as a ghost. "I'm so embarrassed to tell you this but it seems that I misread your test results. You are right, I misspoke, you really don't have any terminal disease. Thank G-d you are healthy! This is such good news."

Donny was flabbergasted. "Is that all you are going to say? Because of you I sold my business and spent millions of dollars on traveling and I spent a year of my life, all because of your mistaken diagnosis. I want you to give it all back to me!"

The doctor felt very bad but insisted that he didn't owe any money as he was just doing his job as best as he could. And besides, Donny spent all the money on himself and he enjoyed himself. It wasn't like the money was wasted or really lost.

This question was brought to Rav Zilberstein. In such a case where the doctor made this mistaken diagnosis, would he be responsible to pay for his mistake?

What do you think?  
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## MITZVA MEME

“*The Torah is not lacking even to the most accomplished scholar, nor is it beyond the grasp of the simplest schoolchild.*

*This is not true of any other book.*

*This is part of the greatness of the Torah.*”

*-The Alter of Slabodka*

next to each other on a branch. Their branch was a healthy branch and their tree was a healthy tree. They were relatively happy with their lot. However, as they noticed how the birds that landed next to them were able to come and go as they pleased, the two leaves grew unhappy. One leaf said to the other "How lucky are those birds! They can fly here and there. They fly up and they fly down. If only we could do the same. We are stuck in the same place and cannot move from our place. Just stuck to our branch and stuck to our tree in one place."

Shortly after their complaining a great storm passed by. Its high winds ripped one of the leaves off the tree. His friend watched how he disconnected from the branch and began flying up and flying down, flying here and flying there. "Oh how lucky my friend is! Now I am stuck here alone and my friend got his dream fulfilled. How unfortunate I am."

Well, we know what happened to his friend. He did have his wish come true but a short time later he began to wilt and then shriveled until he actually decayed and returned to earth.

So often, I meet folks who wonder how can observant Jews be so happy. They are so restricted to what they can eat, where they can go, what they can watch, what they can say and even what they can think! What kind of life is that? Their every move is dictated by the Torah. Do they not enjoy freedom? Are they incapable of making their own decisions? Why must every question be asked to the Rabbi what the Torah says?

With the insight offered by our Sages we can appreciate that being connected to our Source and remaining steadfast to it is the only way to be happy. What joy and what good fortune would we have being disconnected, free and independent of our tree?

There is no greater joy, no greater freedom than being closely fastened to your source of life.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and a beautiful Yom Tov.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### THE BLESSINGS OF SLEEP

This week will be Shavuot. On Shavuot there is a minhag to stay up all night studying Torah and to forgo that night's sleep.

We know that when we don't go to sleep, or stay up very late, our bodies crave sleep. Just as our bodies crave food because we need food to fuel our bodies, we crave sleep when we are tired because there is a certain benefit from sleep that we crave. What exactly are we craving when our body craves sleep? Why do we need sleep?

Let's explore this together. We will start with a simple definition of sleep. How is sleep different than simply closing your eyes? Sleep is a state of mind and body, characterized by altered consciousness, relatively inhibited sensory activity, reduced muscle activity, inhibition of nearly all voluntary muscles, and reduced interactions with surroundings. It is distinguished from wakefulness by a decreased ability to react to stimuli, but it is not entirely blocked from stimuli. It is different from a state of a coma, because during sleep the brain still displays different, active brain patterns.

Ok, that is a definition, But why do we need sleep? How does it help us? The truth is, this question troubled scientists for thousands of years. Interestingly Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (Ramchal) in Derech Hashem (3,1,6) makes the following fascinating statement about the benefits of sleep. "Hashem made humans need sleep so during that time we will regain strength, in every aspect, physical and spiritual, and that we will be restored and be like new in the morning to our service of Hashem."

The Ramchal is saying that sleep has the purpose of restoring our bodies and souls, repairing and rejuvenating them to make them new.

Quite interestingly that is exactly how scientists today describe the purpose of sleep. Harvard Medical School's Division of Sleep Medicine writes: "Sleep provides an opportunity for the body to repair and rejuvenate itself." We crave sleep like we crave eating because sleep is a time when our body repairs, rejuvenates, and restores itself.

This is how it works. During sleep, the body is in a state that helps to restore the immune, nervous, skeletal, and muscular systems. Many of the major restorative functions in the body like muscle growth, tissue repair, and protein synthesis, occur mostly, or in some cases only, during sleep. In addition, during sleep, humans secrete bursts of growth hormone. Not only does our body repair itself during sleep, but this restoration also plays a large role in the function of the endocrine and immune systems. This means that sleep also helps the body remain healthy and stave off diseases. Studies have shown that animals deprived entirely of sleep lose all immune function and die in just a matter of weeks, which indicates that sleep helps to restore the immune system.

Ramchal writes that all parts of the body both physical and spiritual are rejuvenated during sleep. Scientists have shown that not only does sleep repair our body, but it also restores processes that maintain our moods, our memory, and our cognitive function. Sleep is an essential function which allows your mind to recharge, leaving you refreshed and alert when you wake up. While awake, brain metabolism generates a form of waste called end products, which may be damaging to brain cells

and inhibit their proper function. However, during sleep the brain removes these metabolic end products with the lymphatic system. Without enough sleep, the brain cannot function properly. This can impair your ability to concentrate, think clearly, and process memories. In addition, sleep supports the formation of long-term memory, and increases previous learning and experience recall.

As an aside, this insight, that the brain creates harmful metabolic waste the longer it is awake, might be an answer to a question that always bothered me. There is a saying, "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy and wise." Similarly, Rav Ovadia Yosef (cited in the Artsroll biography Maran HaRav Ovadia, by Rabbi Yehuda Heimowitz) made his children promise that they would never go to sleep late past 12 o'clock. The question I always had was, what difference does it make what time you go to bed, the main thing should be how many hours of sleep you have. So if you go to sleep very late one night, as long as you have 7 or 8 hours of sleep afterward it should not be a problem. However, perhaps the answer is that the amount of sleep you need can also depend on how many hours your brain was active and producing metabolic waste. So normally if your brain is active for 17 or 18 hours straight, then 7 or 6 hours of sleep will be sufficient to clean up all that metabolic brain waste. But if you go to sleep late one night and you are up for 22 hours straight one night, you cannot suffice with just 6 or 7 hours of sleep because your body needs extra time to clean out all of the built-up brain waste.

So far we discussed how sleep benefits our body and mind. The Maharal writes that we can often define something by understanding its opposite. What are the detrimental effects of a lack of sleep?

We learned that sleep is a time when the body rebuilds and repairs itself. What happens when the body does not have enough time to rebuild itself? It will malfunction. Low quality sleep has been linked with health conditions like cardiovascular disease, short sleep duration of fewer than seven hours is correlated with coronary heart disease as well as stroke and cardiovascular events. It can also cause obesity. In both children and adults, short sleep duration is associated with an increased risk of obesity, with various studies reporting an increased risk of 45-55%. Lack of sleep can also be a cause of mental illness. Insomnia can cause major depressive disorder, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and psychosis.

As an interesting aside, in Hebrew sleep is *yoshein* while the word for old is *yashan*; they share the same consonants. What is the connection? According to the Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew based on the works of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch both come from the same root meaning. Both *yashan*, old and *yoshein*, sleep mean to weaken. When you are asleep you weaken and when you get older you begin to weaken. But the dictionary also points out that *shina*, sleep and *shinun*, sharpen have the same root. The implication is that sleep and aging are periods when we get weaker, but they are weakening in order to get sharper, and stronger.

Thank you Hashem for the benefits of sleep.

## DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON MAINTAINING STATURE

Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky and Rav Yitzchok Hutner were two of the greatest leaders in the American Jewish community of the past generation. Their respect and adoration for each other is beyond description. With this in mind please appreciate the following incident.

Zalman Diskind, my father's brother, celebrated his vort in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Among the attending dignitaries were Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky, the father in law of his brother, and Rav Yitzchok Hutner, his Rosh Yeshiva. After the vort Reb Yaakov, Rav Hutner and my father decided to take a taxi together back to Brooklyn. Reb Yaakov was returning home to Williamsburg and Rav Hutner and my father were returning to Flatbush. After the taxi crossed the bridge to Brooklyn, Reb Yaakov began telling the driver how to best navigate the streets of Williamsburg. The problem was that many streets in Williamsburg are one-way and one must sometimes take a street in the opposite direction to get to the desired street.

Rav Hutner felt that it was beneath the dignity of such a great Rabbi to be giving driving directions to a taxi driver. He expressed his disappointment to Reb Yaakov for lowering his stature by being involved in the driving duties of this taxi driver.

Reb Yaakov responded; "The great Shmuel, in the Gemara, knew the wisdom of astronomy. In describing his familiarity with astronomy he would say 'I know the paths of heaven like the streets of Nahardaha'. Evidently, even someone as great as Shmuel can know the street system of the city in which he lives and be proud of it."

As told by Paysach Diskind who heard it from his father.

**Pictured, Top To Bottom:** Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky as a young man. Rav Yitzchok Hutner dancing at a wedding with students. Rav Hirsch Diskind, student of Rav Hutner, son-in law of Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, Dean of Bais Yaakov of Baltimore.



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the man who brought home the siddur from shul, Rav Tzvi Berkowitz answered as follows: He has an obligation to return the siddur because it belongs to the shul but this is not called stealing since he did not take it with any awareness that he had it. It would have the dinim of hashavas aveida. He now has a mitzvah of hashavas aveida. In this case he caused it to become an aveida so he should return it right away. See Ketzos Hachoshen siman 25 1

This week's TableTalk is sponsored l'iluy nishmos of our parents on occasion of their yahrzeits

יחזקאל בן יעקב הלוי ג' סיון  
מרים רחל בת יעקב י"ד סיון

By their children Idie and Isser Goldsmith

