

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE HELP

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha discusses the mitzvah of sotah. The Torah teaches us that HaShem is willing to have His Name erased into water for the sake of bringing harmony into the home. This leads us to the following true story.

Troy, a Filipino living in Eretz Yisrael, worked as a housekeeper for the Berger family every Thursday. One day Troy noticed that his employer Mr. Berger looked distraught. He loved his employer and it hurt him to see him so sad. "Mr. Berger, what is bothering you? Why such a sad face?"

Mr. Berger shared, "My daughter Leora really wants to get married. She has been looking for a spouse for such a long time. It hurts me so much that she has been unsuccessful so far". As Mr. Berger spoke, Troy had a sense of *deja vu*. He heard this story before. Where was it from? Then he realized where it came from. Troy also worked as a janitor in a Yeshiva. There was a young man he knew who told him a similar story. Ezra, a young man at the yeshiva shared with him how he had just heard back from a shadchan about yet another failed shidduch attempt.

Troy resolved that he would try to do something to help these people in his life.

The next day Troy went to the yeshiva for



THE PROUD, THE EXCLUSIVE, BUT OPEN TO ALL

In this week's Parsha the Torah instructs us regarding the one who denies the money he owes his friend by use of an oath. In other words, the perpetrator took an oath in the Jewish court denying that he owed his friend money. This is a grave sin on two accounts. The first is that he stole money that belongs to someone else. The second sin is that he used HaShem's Name to cover his misdeed. If this person wishes to correct this sin he must bring a korban and he must pay his friend the money he stole plus an additional 20% as a form of atonement.

In the event that the friend has already passed away at the time this fellow wishes to correct his sin, then he pays the principle plus the 20% to the relative of the deceased. In the event that the deceased left no relative the money is paid to HaShem. This money that is dedicated to be given to HaShem is given to the Kohein as the agent of HaShem.

The Talmud asks how can a Jewish person have no relatives? All Jews are blood relatives to each other; we all come from the same ancestors. If there are no siblings there are cousins or second or third cousins. The Talmud explains that the Torah is discussing a case where the deceased was a convert who, in fact, has no Jewish relatives. This is the specific case which our Parsha discusses.

If we pay attention to this law, we will discover the relationship HaShem es-

his job. He found a friend of Ezra and asked him if he could kindly write on a sheet of paper a short bio and description of Ezra and to place Ezra's contact information on the bottom. The friend happily complied.

Troy took this paper with him to the Berger's. He entered Mr. Berger's office and there was a sefer on the desk. He took his precious paper and placed it on the sefer with a silent prayer that his plan would lead to fruition.

Sure enough a few hours later Mr. Berger went to his office and found the paper. He had no idea where it came from but the description sounded very nice and he felt like it was worth a chance. He picked up the phone and called the number on the paper.

The story has a happy ending. Mr. Berger took the lead on the shidduch and connected his daughter to Ezra. After much effort on Mr. Berger's part, Ezra and Mr. Berger's daughter became engaged. The wedding was a few months later and they were an extremely happy couple.

After the wedding was over Troy went over to Mr. Berger, with a smile. "Mr. Berger, I'm so happy that you took the initiative and called the number on that note I left for you".

In a flash Mr. Berger understood that his Filipino housekeeper, Troy, was the anonymous shadchan.

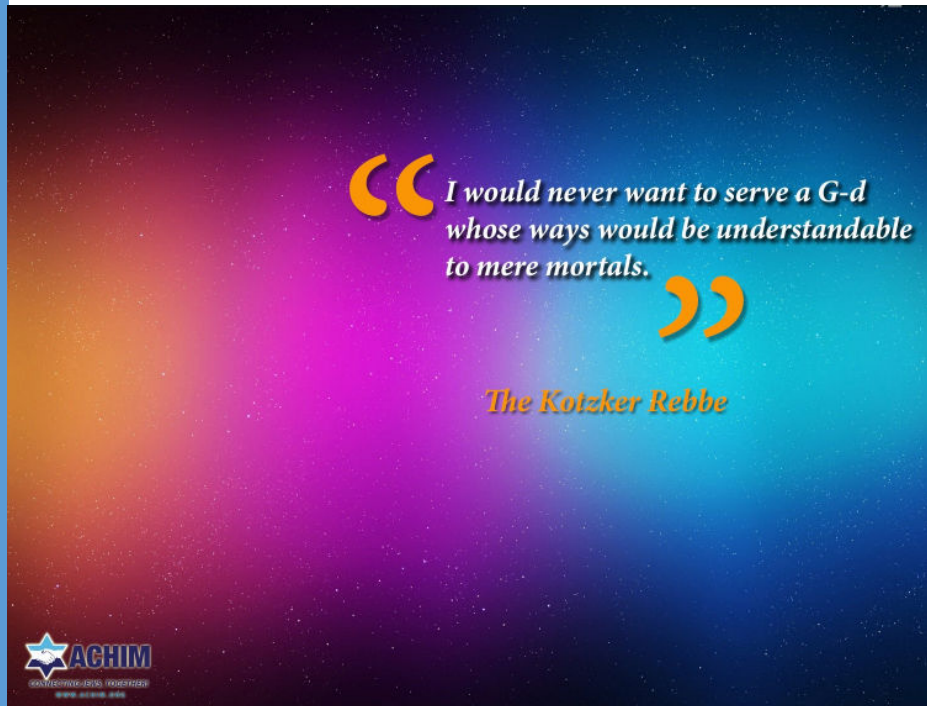
The following thought went through Mr. Berger's head. This was after the wedding and the wedding expenses already weighed on him. It was not a question in his mind that he would buy a very generous gift to express his hakaras hatov, his gratitude to Troy for suggesting the shidduch.

But the custom is that the in-laws pay the shadchan a shadchanus, a fee of about \$2000 for arranging the shidduch. In this case did he have to pay Troy the \$2000 shadchanus?

On one hand Troy was the one who secretly suggested it, but on the other hand, all Troy did was leave a note. The bulk of the work of being a shadchan was done by Mr. Berger. In addition, among Jews it was customary to expect a shadchanus, but Troy was a non-Jew and was not expecting any shadchanus. Perhaps he would not have to give the \$2000 shadchanus. Maybe a simple, more modest gift would suffice.

What do you think? Was Mr. Berger obligated to pay Troy the \$2000 shadchanus?

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establishes between Himself and the convert. The Torah laid down the rule which states that the closest relative to the deceased receives the payment. However, when there is no relative, HaShem becomes his closest relative. Behold! The convert whose ancestors were not present at Mount Sinai and who has no Jewish blood within him, has been adopted by HaShem as His closest relative!

So much strife and war that has plagued world history finds its source in the sentiment of nationalism. The peoples of the world have invested their destiny in the feeling of their national superiority.

There is no nation who might truly be entitled to feel that sense of national superiority other than us? After all, we stand today 3,300 years after our founding as the same

vibrant thriving nation showing no signs of infirmity. We are the people who have delivered the Word of HaShem to the world three millennia after its giving. Ought we not be entitled to feeling national superiority? Would it not be understood that we may look down upon the foreigner?

Immediately following the celebration of Shavuot on which we became this chosen people we read this week's Parsha. It is this Parsha that teaches us that although we are a unique nation like no other nation, we must never exclude the stranger from joining our ranks. Whenever a foreigner chooses to join our people he must be accepted with both hands. And if he passes and leaves no relative to receive the compensation due to him, HaShem will stand for him and accept it as his relative.

We are and ought to be the proudest nation but never exclude anyone from participating in this glory.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE BLESSINGS OF HAIR

This week's Parsha talks about the mitzvah of Nazir. A Nazir cannot cut his hair, cannot drink wine or grape products and he cannot become impure from a dead body.

The Netziv writes that there was a dual purpose for these mitzvos of the Nazir. One, they were a process to allow the Nazir to achieve Ruach hakodesh, a spirit of holiness. Two, and this is particularly true of the mitzvah to grow his hair, this was to keep him far away from arayos, improper relationships with women.

The Chinuch similarly writes that the process for growing his hair was in order to help him to master and subjugate his Yetzer Hara. Why is hair connected to the Yetzer Hara? Let's explore the science behind hair a bit together.

We know that many mammals have a thick layer of fur to keep them warm. But humans don't. Humans have a very fine layer of hair in their bodies, but only have thick hair primarily on their heads. Humans have clothing and other means of keeping warm. There are at least five main benefits of hair.

1 . The hair found on the head serves primarily as a source of heat insulation for the head. Our brains are relatively small, but are enormously metabolically active. This activity produces heat, and head hair could insulate this area of concentrated warmth.

2 . But it also has the opposite effect of preventing our heads from getting too hot. Since humans walk upright on two legs, our heads are directly exposed to the sun. This means there's a greater amount of heat that reaches it directly. Sun exposure can be overbearing, and head hair helps people avoid overheating. It's sort of a built-in hat.

3 . The hair on the head doesn't only protect from heat. It also protects from something perhaps more dangerous; radiation. Hair on the head serves as protection from ultraviolet radiation exposure to the head.

4 . Hair on the head also acts as an active cooling mechanism. The hair traps sweat. When the sweat evaporates, it cools the head.

If hair on the head has all these benefits of insulating, cooling and protecting from UV radiation, perhaps it would have been better for humans to have thick hair on all the parts of their bodies?

However, scientists have suggested that the fact that humans don't have hair on the whole body is really a huge benefit. This is called the ectoparasite hypothesis. Ectoparasites are parasites that live on the outside of the host's body. These parasites — which include lice, ticks and fleas — are a major cause of disease and mortality across many different species. Ectoparasites are less attracted to hairless skin, and it is easier to get rid of them when they're not buried in hair. Therefore having less hair, and thus fewer parasites, is a huge

advantage to humans. So HaShem gave humans hair in a perfect balance. We have it in places where we need them, but not where it would cause harm.

5 . Scientists say that there is an additional purpose of hair. Humans don't just have head hair; we style it. Archaeologists have found that ancient people also styled their hair. Why do humans style their hair? We don't just have head hair but we have it in a form that can be attractive to members of the opposite gender. Hair has the purpose of attracting a mate.

Why do men grow beards? It is a result of the extra testosterone. Facial hair follicles respond aggressively to testosterone, the hormone abundant in men. Scientists describe that the purpose of a beard is to show the difference between the genders. This signals that a person is a male and that they can be a suitable spouse.

We see that although hair has the purpose of protecting the person, there is an additional purpose of creating an attraction.

This corresponds exactly with what the Netziv and Chinuch taught. The purpose of letting one's hair become unkempt during Nazir is to overcome the urge towards immorality..

This may also explain a fascinating observation. Several apparently unrelated words have the same etymological root as Se'ar hair. Seor, sourdough starter, Seorah, barley, Sa'ir, goat, Seirim, strong winds. What is the connection between these ostensibly unrelated words? With this insight that hair has the purpose of creating an attraction, it is more clear. Seor, yeast sourdough causes dough to ferment and become sour. Our Sages say that seor represents the yetzer hara, the powerful force that moves us. Se'irim are powerful winds that can move us. Se'ar, hair has the purpose of attracting us to the other gender. Seorah, barley represents animal food, and visceral animal desires. A goat is an animal that represents our independent streak and yetzer hara that has to be subjugated to serve Hashem.

This of course also explains the mitzvah for a woman to cover her hair after she is married. Hair has the purpose of attracting the other gender and once she is married, it should only be reserved for her husband.

Let us conclude with some interesting hair facts. Which hair color is the most rare? Red hair. Only 1% of the world's population has natural red hair. The second most rare hair color is blonde. Only 2% of the world's population has blond hair.

How long do you have to be a Nazir to have long hair? It takes about 7 years to grow it to your waist, and 3 years to grow it to your shoulders!

Thank you Hashem for the blessings of Hair.

JEWISH COMPETITION

Anyone living in New York will long remember where he or she was at 4:11 PM on Thursday, August 14, 2003. On that notoriously hot and muggy day, more than fifty million people were left without power in a huge blackout that abruptly halted the subway system and darkened homes, offices, and businesses. While some places regained power within several hours, in others, people waited days for their electricity to be restored.

When Klein's Kosher Ice Cream in Brooklyn lost its power that Thursday afternoon, Mr. Abba Klein, the owner, was understandably quite concerned. How long would the power outage last? He knew that his freezers had the ability to keep ice cream in a frozen state for about twenty-four hours given the 90-degree weather outside. Thankfully, power was restored to the Klein's warehouse early Friday morning, and none of the products were spoiled. As he watched other businesses losing thousands of dollars in ruined merchandise, Mr. Klein felt incredibly grateful for his stroke of good fortune. Instead of continuing business as usual on Friday morning, Mr. Klein called his son Pinchas into his office. "Hashem has been very kind to us; we could have taken a huge monetary loss," began Mr. Klein. "I would like you to find out if our competitor Mehadrin Ice Cream has electricity in its warehouse. Please call them and see if they need our help. Whatever profit we make selling ice cream is determined by Hashem. Helping our competitor will not affect how much money we will ultimately earn."

After speaking with neighbors of Mehadrin, Pinchas ascertained that Mehadrin did not have any electricity, nor was there any power in that entire area. Pinchas then called Mr. Zalman Leib Farkas, the owner of Mehadrin, to offer him the use of Klein's frozen warehouse. Mr. Farkas could not believe his ears! His biggest competitor was making him an unbelievable offer. He thanked Pinchas for calling and accepted immediately. Mr. Farkas sent two large trucks filled with ice cream to Klein's warehouse. The Kleins rearranged their warehouse to make room for Mehadrin's ice cream. In addition, they hooked up special cables to run power from the warehouse to the two Mehadrin trucks. Although this was a difficult and costly task, it was done without hesitation. Mr. Farkas was overwhelmed with the magnitude of Mr. Klein's kindness. Because of Mr. Klein's gracious offer, Mr. Farkas was able to avert monumental losses.

A shopper walking down the frozen food aisle of any kosher supermarket will see Klein's and Mehadrin ice creams displayed side by side. One might think the two companies are rivals, unless, of course, he knows the rest of the story....

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the doctor who advised his patient to go on a world wide trip because he was terminally ill, but actually gave a mistaken diagnosis, Rav Zilberstein responded as follows. The doctor would not have to pay for the loss as it was a grama, and he did not intend to damage him. However the management should fire this doctor as he was negligent by giving this poorly considered advice.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of Alexander Malachevsky
אלכסנדר בן מאיר
 on the occasion of his yartzeit
 By his brothers Boris and Roman

