



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE CRASH

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Parsha, we find that Binyamin is accused of stealing.

This leads us to the following true story. Ben bought a brand new late-model car. It was a very attractive sedan that often turned heads when he passed people.

He had to drop something off at his son's high school office. He parked in front of the high school and left the car running. It was hot outside, and he wanted to keep the air conditioner running. He rationalized to himself that he would go in and out and be back in less than 60 seconds. He left the keys in the car with the engine still running. He knew that leaving a car unattended with the keys in the ignition was illegal and liable for a hefty fine, but he rationalized to himself that it would be under a minute.

Ben ran inside the high school office and dropped off his forms. He ran out of the school when he saw his son's teacher. Ben started to talk to the teacher. But Ben got stuck in the conversation for longer than he expected.

Meanwhile, the fancy car was running with



LETTER OUT OF THE BLUE

In 1989 I had the opportunity to ride a train from Riga to Minsk. I was staring out the window watching miles of forests passing by. My mind was enveloped with the thought that only 48 years earlier in these very forests I would have been a hunted animal by the Germans ym'sh. Somehow, being in the very location where the event occurred, even though it was many years later, brought the event to the fore of my mind. Perhaps this is why Chazal instruct us to recite a bracha when visiting the place where one experienced a miraculous salvation. For that matter, this bracha is also recited when one visits the place where one's parent experienced such a miracle. The bracha reads; "Blessed are You... Who performed a miracle to my father in this place."

What is the purpose of reciting this bracha? Perhaps the recitation of this bracha is our response to the thoughts that fill our mind. When we become aware of the miracles HaShem has performed for us, we are naturally filled with gratitude for that miracle. However, there is much more. When we remember those miracles we become filled with a renewed sense of trust in Him. The challenges we encounter suddenly become easier to deal with, as follows.

Take for example a person facing a serious sickness. The family tries to get the best medical attention. The best doctor, the best hospital and so on. Out of the blue, they receive a letter from the world renowned expert on this disease, asking how they are. In his letter he tells them how he is related to them through marriage and he is interested in connecting with them. He indicates that he will be coming to town and hopes that they are available to meet with him. Can you imagine the joy that this letter would generate? While they still need a yeshua and a refuah, there is hope. After all, when a letter comes from

the keys in the ignition in front of a boys' high school. Eli, who was 14 years old, was talking with his friends. They pointed out the running car. One of his friends made a joke about driving the car. Eli wanted to impress his friends. "I know how to drive. I can show you," he said. His buddies egged him on. He looked around and hopped into the car. He put the gear into what he thought was drive. In truth, though, the gear was in reverse. Eli put his foot on the gas pedal, and the car immediately shot backward. It slammed hard into the trunk of a tree. Thankfully no one, including Eli, was hurt. The car, however, was a different story. The back was very badly smashed. Ben looked up from his conversation, and to his shock, he saw his car smashed into a tree. He ran to the car and spoke to Eli, who walked out.

Ben asked Eli to call his parents. Eli's parents came to the scene within half an hour. Ben told Eli's parents that he expected Eli or his parents to pay for the damage to the car. The repairs were going to be more than \$6000. Eli's parents had a different perspective. Eli's mother said, "As you know, leaving a car running with the keys in the ignition is illegal. In addition, you left it running in front of a high school filled with rowdy teenage boys. So what did you expect would happen?" Because Ben broke the law by leaving the car unattended, and because he was negligent by leaving it in front of mischievous boys, it was Ben's fault; therefore, they should not have to pay anything.

Ben, of course, did not see it that way, but they agreed to bring this question to a Rav. What do you think? Is Eli liable for the damage he did to the car? Or perhaps he is not liable because Ben broke the law by leaving the car unattended, and he was also negligent and foolish for leaving an attractive sports sedan, running with the keys in the ignition, in front of a boy's high school.

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out of the blue, we know Who lives in the Blue!

Every time we are touched by a miracle, we are reminded that HaShem is watching us, He is paying attention to us and is aware of our challenges. We know we are not alone. The tremendous chizuk that comes from that miracle provides much more than the miracle itself.

Many people reading this article are dealing with some sort of challenge. If they were aware how involved HaShem is in their difficulty, how much He is thinking of them, their pain would be significantly reduced. They would still need a yeshua, but they would be hopeful and anticipate a salvation.

In addition to lifting their spirits, they would experience a genuine closeness to HaShem. That closeness in its own right generates salvation.

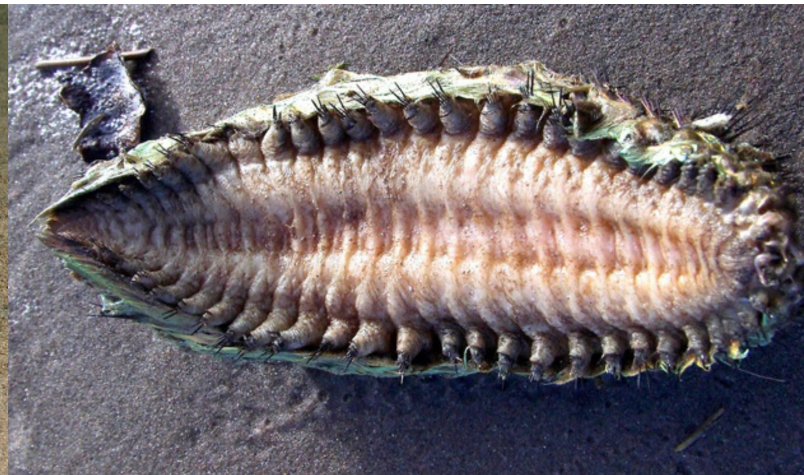
Every evening of this week as we gather around the menorah to light those lights we will recite that same bracha; "Blessed are You... Who performed miracles to our ancestors in this period of time." Just like the bracha we recite in the place of our parent's miracle.

As we recite that bracha may we be able to bring to heart the miracle HaShem did for us many years ago. Let us ask HaShem to give us the strength to deal with our challenges and to send a yeshua to release us from the constriction that we experience.

Perhaps the reason Chanuka is a time for miracles is because we become more focused in His involvement in our life and we anticipate His salvation.

Have a wonderful Shabbos Chanukah, Shabbos Rosh Chodesh and a beautiful Chanukah.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE SEA MOUSE

Let's continue our exploration of Hashem's fascinating and unusual creatures.

We know that there are many sea creatures that are an analog to land creatures. For example, we have sea horses, sea lions, sea snakes, sea cows, and sea cucumbers. How about a mouse? Is there a sea creature that is an analog to a mouse?

Of course. Please meet the fascinating Sea Mouse!

The Sea Mouses' scientific name is *Aphrodita*. While it looks just like an iridescent mouse and is called a mouse, it is really a fascinating type of marine worm! It is actually related to earthworms you'd find in your yard. It has segments like an earthworm, but you can't see it from the top because it is covered with what looks like fur. The body of the sea mouse is covered in a dense mat of bristles and hairlike structures, which give it a furry appearance. But on the worm's underside, its segments are clearly visible. The sea mouse has 40 segments. Unlike a typical worm, its segmented body is short and broad, not long and thin.

They are most often found in the Mediterranean sea and the eastern and western Atlantic Ocean. They are also found in the Chesapeake Bay, not far from Baltimore. They live in moderately deep water in muddy ocean bottoms. The bristles are often covered with mud and mucus, and since they usually live in muddy bottoms and are not easy to find. They are usually only observed if dragged up with fishing gear or if they are thrown on the shore in storms.

Adults generally fall within a size range of 3 to 6 inches, but some grow to be as big as 12 inches. They are between 2 and 3 inches wide.

Instead of eyes the sea mouse has two pairs of feeler-like appendages close to the mouth called palps. The segments of the mouse have leg-like appendages on each side called parapodia. They propel themselves by swinging the parapodia back and forth.

How does it breathe? The upper surface of a sea

mouse has 15 pairs of raised scales. The space between the scales and the body surface forms a channel for the flow of water carrying oxygen for respiration.

The sea mouse is an active predator, hunting small crabs and other worms on the seabed. It burrows and creeps in a manner suggestive of a true mouse as it searches for small crabs or dead and decaying bodies of animals.

Let's now talk about its most unique feature, the sea mouse's "fur". The sea mouse's back is covered with bristles. Some of the finest bristles on the back of a sea mouse are much smaller in width than a human hair. Normally, these have a deep red sheen, warning off predators, but when the light shines on them perpendicularly, they flush with a beautiful and brilliant iridescent green, gold, and blue. It is spectacular.

Why does it flash this color? This coloration is a defense mechanism, giving a warning signal to potential predators.

How does this hair produce this color? Scientists explain that many hexagonal cylinders produce the effect within the hair, which "perform much more efficiently than man-made optical fibers."

This has very important scientific significance, and the sea mouses' amazing bristles may have an important use for humans. Researchers in Norway have found that the properties which give the worms' hairs their iridescence also lend themselves very well to nanotechnology — the science of studying and controlling very small things, like atoms. For example, the sea mouse's bristles can be used as tiny wires (called nanowires) to conduct charged ions, making them potentially useful for building miniature electronic devices such as in-vitro health sensors and computer processors.

Talk about a mighty mouse!

Thank you, Hashem, for your wondrous creation!

REJECTION IS PROTECTION

There was a wealthy Polish Jew who told people that he became wealthy because he was unable to write. He explained that when he came to town many years earlier as a poor man, the Rov offered him the position of shamash of the shul. However, upon hearing that he cannot write, the offer was withdrawn. He asked the Rov for a suggestion as another source of income instead. The Rov told him to buy cheap in one town and sell high in the next town. He followed his wise advice and became a successful businessman.

Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky told me that his life story resembles that very story.

Reb Yaakov was rov in Tzitevian, a very small and very poor shtetl. The poverty in which he and his family lived led him to look for a position in the larger town which could afford to provide him a more comfortable salary. The position as successor to Rav Leib Rubin in Volkimir opened up but for some reason that opportunity fell through. At the time, Reb Yaakov felt the pain of rejection. How much better it would have been had he gotten that position. With no alternative, he remained in Tzitevian until 1938.

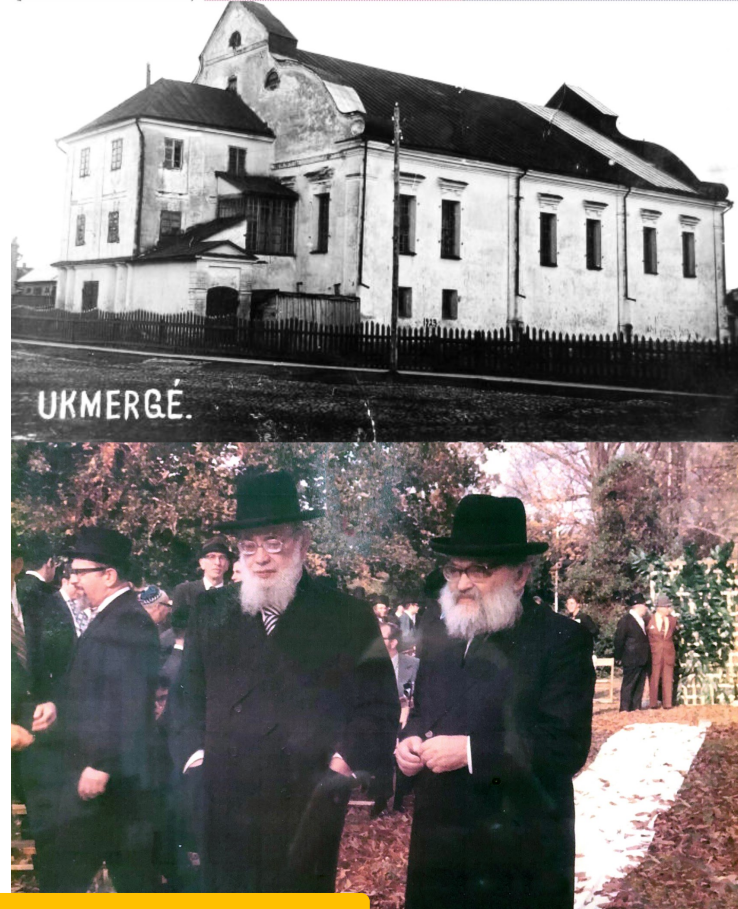
His poverty had reached such a low level that in 1938 he decided to make a trip to America and raise funds for a Lithuanian Yeshiva and he would receive a handsome commission in return. Upon his arrival to these shores Reb Yaakov followed the unfolding news from Europe. Although he followed the unfolding news while in Europe, nevertheless, as he was in America he was able to see the news from a new perspective. From his new perspective he realized that the Jews of Europe were doomed and there was no future anymore in Europe.

He immediately sent his wife and family tickets and brought them to America.

"If I would have gotten the Rabbinate in Volkimir, I would have ended the way that Rov ended. How fortunate I am that I was rejected."

Told By R' Paysach Diskind

Pictured, Top To Bottom: A map of Lithuania and Vilkomir, The Great Synagogue of Vilkomir (Ukmerge), Rav Yackov Kamenetzky standing with Rav Yackov Yitzchak Ruderman



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the garden, Rav Zilberstein answered that the elderly man is right as we find in sources in the Torah that a garden gives joy. However, it would be best for him to be mevater (give in) and find his joy from watching the children play on the playground instead.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of
Mrs. Rivkah Diskind

May HaShem continue blessing her with good health for many long, happy and healthy years
By her children

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