

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



CAT & BIRD

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha compares Yehuda to a lion, Yisachar to a donkey, Dan to a snake, Naftali to a gazelle, and Binyamin to a wolf. Here is a true story about two animals.

Basya was walking down the street near her house. She saw a very beautiful bird standing on the grass. She stopped to look at it when she suddenly saw a large orange cat nearby, crouching and looking like it was about to pounce. It became clear to Basya that the cat was about to attack the bird. It was either going to eat the bird or at least attack it to practice its hunting skills.



THIRST MAKES THE WATER SWEET

In this week's Parsha, as Yaakov draws close to parting from this world, he calls his 12 sons to gather around him as he wishes to inform them of the date when his people will achieve their ultimate mission. Before Yaakov has the chance to reveal when that point in time will come, he loses his ruach haKodesh and never tells them. For some reason HaShem wanted that this date should remain a secret.

If HaShem wanted this date to remain a secret, why did HaShem allow Yaakov to tell his sons that he was going to reveal the date. Would it not have been better if Yaakov would have abandoned the whole idea of revealing it. Why make it a tease?

It would seem that HaShem wanted the shevatim to know that there was a designated date by when Moshiach would arrive; he would not arrive later than that date. He therefore wanted Yaakov to call his sons to inform them when that date would be. However, HaShem wanted that date to be elusive. The question is if HaShem wants us to be confident in the arrival of Moshiach, why not give us the date?

A dear friend of mine was married 13 years before he and his wife were blessed with a baby. Finally, after 13 years HaShem blessed

Basya's first impulse was to scare away the cat to protect the bird. "How mean of the cat to attack such a beautiful bird," she thought to herself. It would be a mitzvah of preventing tzar balei chayim, preventing pain to the bird. But then she wondered if perhaps scaring away the cat would be the wrong thing. She would be causing harm to the cat both by scaring it away and by denying its ability to eat.

But then she thought that the cat could get food from other sources, like from garbage cans or from kind people. The cat didn't have to kill a magnificent bird to eat, so maybe it was the right thing to scare away the cat.

She was unsure what to do, so she didn't do anything.

This question was later sent to Rav Zilberstein. What is the Torah perspective in such a case? Should you scare away the cat to protect the bird, or should you be passive and let the cat hunt for its food?

See Upiryo Matok Shemos 49

“Worry is a conversation with yourself about the things you cannot change.
Prayer is a conversation you have with HaShem about the things that He can change.”



them with a beautiful baby boy. When I saw him at the sholom zachor, he shared with me his sentiment of his intense gratitude to HaShem. “All these years I would imagine what joy I would have to hold my own child in my arms. Now that HaShem has actually blessed us with this child, the joy of holding him exceeds my greatest imagination. I am confident that if HaShem did not make us wait so long, this joy would not be as great. We would not have appreciated it as much as we do now. I therefore wish to express my gratitude to Him for making us wait 13 years.”

If they were told when they first married that the first baby would arrive after 13 years, it is certain that their joy and exhilaration would not be the same as

they experienced now. They would have waited patiently and after 13 years they would welcome their child. The reason for their heightened appreciation was because they waited month after month, hope after hope, prayer after prayer. It was a preoccupation of yearning for this child that gave way to their intense joy with the final arrival of the baby.

HaShem wants us to be filled with intense joy and exhilaration with the arrival of Moshiach. He therefore assured us that Moshiach will definitely come. Yaakov told us that Moshiach is coming. We also know that he can come at any time. And so, every year and every generation we anticipate his coming. With prayer after prayer and hope after hope we anticipate his arrival. When Moshiach will finally arrive we will be filled with that intense gratitude. Perhaps we will even be grateful to Him for making us wait so long.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE SCIENCE OF SMILES

In this week's Parsha, in the Bracha for Yehuda, the Torah writes **וְלִבָּן שָׁנִים מִחֶלֶב** "His teeth are whiter than milk." Our Sages in Kesuvos 111b say this means that "giving someone a smile is better than giving him milk." The Shita Mekubetzes there explains that milk symbolizes sweetness. Our Sages are teaching that giving a person a smile is sweeter than the sweetness of giving him milk. In Pirkei Avos (1:15), Shamai teaches that one is supposed to greet every person with a smiling face. Rabbi Yishmael said (3:12) we must greet everyone with joy.

The Sefer Charedim 35-20 wrote that this is not simply good advice, but it is mitzva d'rabanan. So every time we give someone a smile, we are doing a mitzvah d'rabanan.

Not only is smiling at people a mitzvah, but science has shown that it has some fascinating benefits as well.

According to WebMD, when we smile, it makes us happier. When people's facial muscles come together to create a smile, even if they're not thinking about smiling, something happens through the body-mind connection that results in the sensation of happiness.

Researchers aren't sure how this occurs. Some suggest that "if you activate a smile, the peripheral nervous system tells the rest of the system that happiness is happening, and it tries to catch up."

Other researchers explain that smiling spurs a chemical reaction in the brain, releasing certain hormones, including dopamine and serotonin. Dopamine increases our feelings of happiness. Serotonin release is associated with reduced stress.

Not only does smiling make you happier, but it can also boost your immunity and prevent you from getting sick. Experts in the field of psychoneuroimmunology (the study of how the brain is connected to the immune system) assert that it has been shown "over and over again" that depression weakens your immune system. On the other hand, happiness caused by smiling has been shown to boost our body's resistance. Just the physical act of smiling can make a difference in building your immunity.

Similar studies have found that smiling helps reduce the body's response to stress and lowers the heart rate in tense situations; another study linked smiling to lower blood pressure, and another study suggests that smiling leads to living longer.

Studies have shown that smiling releases endorphins, other natural painkillers, and serotonin. Together, these brain chemicals make us feel good from head to toe. Not only do they elevate your mood, but they also relax your body and reduce physical pain. So smiling is a natural painkiller.

It is fascinating that this works even if one smiles because

they are forced to. A study performed by a group at the University of Cardiff in Wales found that people who could not frown due to botox injections were happier on average than those who could frown.

Another fascinating thing is that the benefits of smiling don't only help the smiler but those who see you smile. Much like yawning, smiling is contagious. This is because we have mirror neurons that fire when we see certain activities. Mirror neurons enable us to copy or reflect the behavior we observe in others and have been linked to the capacity for empathy. So when we see others smile, our mirror neurons give us the same effect as if we are smiling ourselves.

Even if we smile at ourselves in the mirror, it triggers our mirror neurons and can also help us calm down and re-center if we're feeling low or anxious.

Smiling may lead to success. Research has shown that people who smile regularly appear more confident, are more likely to be approached, and are more likely to be promoted at work. Try putting on a smile at meetings and business appointments. You might find that people react to you differently.

There are lots of different languages spoken across the world. But there is one language that can be understood across the entire globe. You can communicate all over the world with a smile! In every society, a smile means the same thing.

People can "hear" smiles. Have you ever been on the phone with someone and just knew they were smiling on the other end? That's not a fluke! When you smile, it changes your mouth's shape and impacts your voice's sound. Even if we don't realize it, we pick up on these cues, so we can often determine when people are smiling by the sound of their voices.

Let's conclude with a few fascinating simile facts.

Did you know that there isn't just one type of smile? There are 19. However, only 6 of those 19 smiles are for happiness. Some of the smiles that aren't for happiness are embarrassed, miserable, and fake smiles.

Children smile more than adults! According to studies, children laugh around 300 – 500 times a day! But adults laugh around 17.5 times a day. Women smile more than men.

Newborns prefer a smiling person to a non-smiling person.

Smiles are the most easily recognized facial expression; they can be recognized from over 300 feet away.

Did you smile while reading this article?

(Pictured, Right To Left: Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky, Rav Malkiel Kotler)

IS MOSHIACH COMING THIS YEAR?

Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky was a Rav in Toronto from the late 40's into the early 50's. In 1950 a rumor was being spread that Moshiach was coming that year. One of Reb Yaakov's constituents approached him with the following question. "Tell me, Rebbe, is Moshiach really coming this year?"

Reb Yaakov asked him what difference it made whether Moshiach came this year or a different year. The man explained that he owns a retail store and because of his situation he is unable to close his store on Shabbos. "But if Moshiach is coming this year, I do not want Moshiach to catch me with the store open on Shabbos." Therefore, if he knew Moshiach was coming he would shut the store on Shabbos.

Reb Yaakov responded to him that the chances of Moshiach coming this year are the same as his coming last year or next year.

Reb Yaakov explained to me that although this fellow would have closed his store on Shabbos for the entire year, nevertheless, if Moshiach would not have come, after the year he would return to opening the store on Shabbos and would have lost his hope of the arrival of Moshiach.

Now, he has trust in the arrival of Moshiach and is even concerned about being caught as a mechalel Shabbos!

As told to Paysach Diskind

Pictured: Top, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky as a young man. Bottom, Rav Yaakov with Rav Aharon Kotler



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the burned wall, Rav Zilberstein said that it would be better not to remember the miracle with something that is not respectful to the shul. In shul, we don't even do the regular zecher lachurban of leaving an amah unplastered. Therefore it would be best to remember the miracle with a Seudas Hoda'ah. See Upiryo Matok Shemos 58

This week's TableTalk is dedicated as a zechus for a refuah sheleima for

Tzvi ben Gittel

By Avraham and Leah Margolis

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