



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE SHORTCUT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses the mitzvah of counting the Omer. We all know that we are currently in this period, which is a time for reflection on how we can improve our relationships with others. This brings us to the following story.

Izzy lived in a condominium with six units. In the center of the complex, there was a pathway that connected to the sidewalk. The pathway was used to walk to each of the respective units. The pathway ended at a parking lot. Adjacent to the parking lot was a shul. People often used the pathway as a shortcut from the sidewalk to the parking lot and shul, saving them about two minutes of walking time.

Izzy felt uncomfortable with strangers



TORAH; THE WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

In this week's Parsha we are given a great mitzvah; the mitzvah of Kiddush HaShem, of sanctifying the Name of HaShem and avoiding disgracing, G.D forbid, His Name. This mitzvah is so great that the price we must be ready to pay to fulfill this mitzvah or to avoid transgressing it is our life itself. This means that if in the presence of ten Jews one is forced to disavow himself as being part of HaShem's people, he must forfeit his life before doing so. Every Jew, by virtue of his being a member of HaShem's chosen people carries the Name of HaShem in him. By disavowing our loyalty we are desecrating that Name of HaShem.

How are we to understand the primacy of this mitzvah over seemingly much greater mitzvos such as Shabbos, Yom Kippur and so on?

When reviewing the past 4,000 years of human history from all the sources available we find that from the beginning of this period man has behaved in a manner which we would classify as cruel, barbaric and intensely decadent. Infanticide and all types of murder and acute forms of immorality were the accepted lifestyle. This description applied across the entire socioeconomic spectrum. There was no corner of society anywhere in the world where the sanctity of life was recognized. Nowhere was it recognized that all people have a right to justice and to a fair hearing in a court of law. Things that we take for granted were simply unheard of.

HaShem created Man in His Image. This means that Man has the ability to achieve a holiness that resembles HaShem in some way. HaShem's objective

from the street using the pathway, as he was concerned about his privacy, potential noise, and people looking into his apartment.

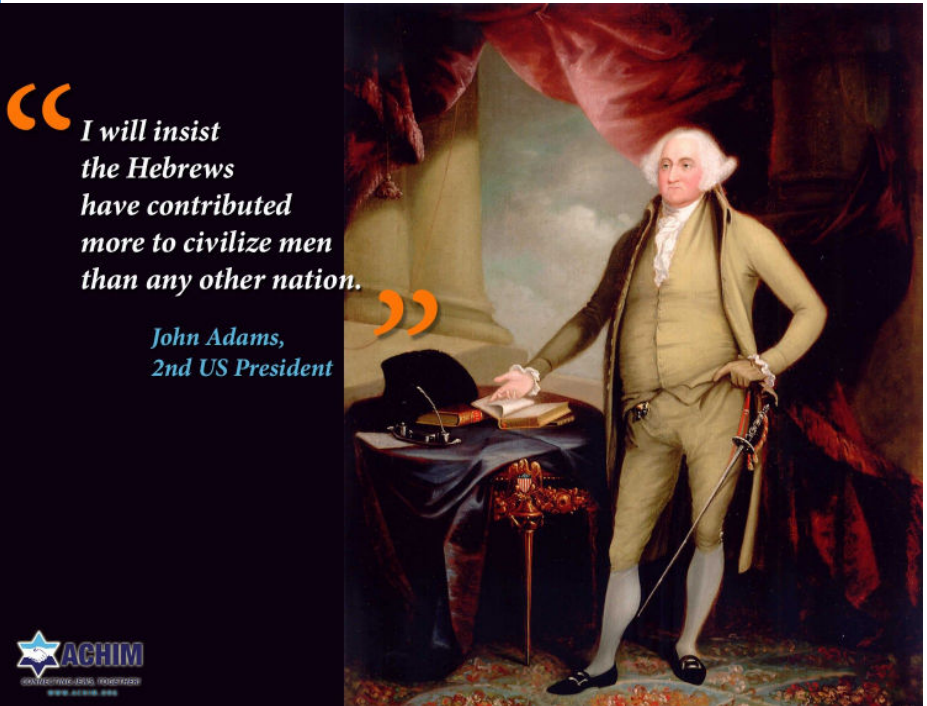
One day, when Izzy saw someone using the path as a shortcut, he politely told them that it was private property and asked them not to use it. The person replied that they had spoken to some of the other condo owners, who didn't mind people using the shortcut. Izzy, taken aback, asserted that he was also an owner and didn't want people walking through. The person apologized but mentioned that they had received permission from some other owners.

Izzy felt uneasy about the situation and wondered if he had the right to stop people from using the pathway.

On one hand, as a condo owner, he had rights to the path and could prevent people from using it. Does one owner's disapproval hold enough weight to block access, considering they have 1/6 of the ownership of the pathway?

On the other hand, some of the other five owners may have permitted its use. Can people use the pathway as long as even one owner allows it?

What do you think?



with creating this world was for Man to prepare this world to be worthy to house His Presence. At the same time, He was committed to allow Man to practice his own free will. Never does He take away one's free will.

How did HaShem expect Man with all of his decadence to show his Godly side? How would Man realize his Godliness and prepare this world to be a residence of His Presence? What was HaShem's plan?

HaShem created a people and endowed them with His Presence. He chose us to be His Kingdom of Priests (teachers) and a nation striving for Holiness. HaShem gave us His Torah and embedded it within the soul of our people. The Torah, whose value system did not come from Man, it could not have come from Man because there were no men who thought in those terms, other than our forefathers. Every lesson and every value in the Torah is directly

from HaShem.

Equipped with His Torah the Jewish people flourished into a nation who from our very beginning lived with the values that recognized the sanctity of life, that recognized the rights of every person irrespective of his class, rank, age, economic standing, that recognized the responsibility of the community to care for every member of their society. We lived alone based on this unique value system while the rest of the world remained barbaric and decadent. It was only after a couple millenia did the world turn their head to see how this little nation lives their lives and how successful they are in maintaining an enduring society showing no signs of frailty thousands of years of their inception. Slowly the world began to accept some of the values of our Torah.

The primacy of this mitzvah is because it is the core mission of our people. We must carry that Great Name and make it a reality by living every second of our life according to His precepts. The moment we abandon that mission we have lost our purpose.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

A GIANT TURTLE: THE LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLE

Most of us have seen a turtle up close. Some of us have even held turtles in our hands. But can you imagine a giant turtle that is larger than a person? A turtle that weighs close to 2,000 pounds? Meet the fascinating Leatherback Sea Turtle.

The Leatherback Sea Turtle is the largest of all living turtles and the heaviest non-crocodylian reptile. It can reach lengths of up to 7 feet and weigh between 550 and 1,540 pounds. One Leatherback Turtle, found on the west coast of Wales in 1988, measured around 6.6 feet in size and weighed a colossal 1,984 pounds—making it heavier than some Sumatran Rhinos!

The Leatherback is named for its unique carapace (upper shell), which is covered by oily flesh and flexible, leather-like skin, making it different from other sea turtles that have a bony shell. The shell feels almost rubbery to the touch. This unique, flexible shell allows it to dive up to 1,200 meters (4,000 feet) deep—deeper than any other turtle species. Only sperm whales, elephant seals, and beaked whales can outdo the Leatherback when it comes to deep-sea diving! Its shell is made of soft skin covering bone-like pieces, connected in a special pattern that provides strength and flexibility. This design helps the shell resist breaking and protects the turtle from pressure at great depths. Leatherbacks can stay underwater for up to 85 minutes. Leatherbacks are also the fastest-moving non-avian reptiles, reaching speeds of up to 21.92 mph in the water.

Its front flippers are much larger than typical turtles. Their flippers can grow up to 8.9 feet in large specimens. Think about that. Imagine flippers that are almost ten feet long!

Instead of teeth, the Leatherback Turtle has points on its upper lip and backwards spines in its throat to help it swallow food and prevent its prey from escaping once caught. (Pictured: Bottom, second to right) Yes they do look scary!

Leatherback Turtles are world travelers, with a wide-ranging habitat that spans as far north as Newfoundland, Canada, and as far south as South America. One turtle was tracked on a 12,000-mile foraging journey from Indonesia to the United States over a period of 647 days. Their broad range and adaptability to different environments are due to an internal counter-current heat exchange system and large quantities of oil in their bodies, which enable them to maintain a higher core temperature than the surrounding water. These special features allow Leatherbacks to tolerate colder conditions that other species cannot.

Adult Leatherback Turtles mainly feed on jellyfish. (Pictured: Bottom, right) Pacific Leatherbacks migrate about 6,000 miles across the Pacific from their nests in Indonesia to eat California jellyfish. Because they eat jellyfish, they sometimes mistake plastic bags, often

coming from the US's west coast, for jellyfish. It is estimated that one-third of adult Leatherbacks have ingested plastic. Sharp plastics can rupture internal organs and bags can cause intestinal blockages leaving turtles unable to feed, resulting in starvation. Even if they survive, consuming plastic can make turtles unnaturally buoyant, which can stunt their growth and lead to slow reproduction rates.

Leatherbacks follow their jellyfish prey throughout the day, preferring deeper water in the daytime and shallower water at night when the jellyfish rise up the water column. This hunting strategy often places turtles in very cold waters. One individual was found actively hunting in waters with temperatures as low as 0.4 °C (32.7 °F). After each foraging dive, the Leatherback would return to warmer (17.5 °C, 63.5 °F) surface waters to regain body heat before continuing to dive into near-freezing waters.

Leatherback Turtles have a lifespan that can range from 30 to 100 years. The massive adults face few serious predators, although they can occasionally fall prey to large marine predators such as killer whales, great white sharks, and tiger sharks. Nesting females have been preyed upon by jaguars in the American tropics. Adult Leatherbacks have been observed aggressively defending themselves at sea from predators. A medium-sized adult was seen chasing a shark that had attempted to bite it, and then turned its aggression toward the boat containing the humans observing the prior interaction.

Unlike male Leatherback Turtles, which remain in the water for their entire lives, females come ashore to nest. They dig a nest above the high-tide line using their flippers and can lay up to nine clutches in a single breeding season, with an average of nine days between each nesting event. The typical clutch size is around 110 eggs, of which 85% are viable, while the remaining 15% fail to develop into hatchlings.

The eggs take approximately 60 to 70 days to hatch. The eggs are similar in size to billiard balls. To protect the eggs from predators, the females carefully cover the nest with sand before returning to the sea.

Once they hatch, usually after nightfall, the hatchlings, the baby turtles, dig their way to the surface and make their way towards the sea. (Pictured: Top, right) However, many of them fall prey to gulls and other birds before reaching the water, while large fish and other predators await those that manage to enter the sea.

Female Leatherback Turtles exhibit strong natal homing behavior, meaning they return to the same beach where they were born to lay their eggs. This remarkable site fidelity ensures that the females lay their eggs in a familiar and suitable environment.

CARRY THE LOAD

Among the 48 ways to acquire Torah is to carry the load with your friend. The meaning of this is found in the Midrash when it describes the qualities of Dovid Hamelech. When Dovid Hamelech was a shepherd he adopted the following manner of sending the sheep out to pasture. First he sent out the young sheep since they could only eat the soft blades of grass. Once they finished, he sent out the senior sheep since they were able to eat the medium blades of grass. The harder blades were too hard for them. Once the soft and medium blades were taken he would then send out the strong sheep to graze on the hard blades.

In a very similar manner Reb Moshe Juravel taught his elementary school talmidim. He understood well the abilities of each child and wanted every child to succeed. When it came time to test them, he created several tests. The weaker students received the easier test and the less weak received the medium test and the hard test was given to the strongest students.

He would give out papers throughout the year for the boys to keep in their binders. As they would learn in class, these papers would be filled out by the talmidim. He therefore hole-punched all the papers on the left side so that they could be easily placed in their binders. In the beginning of the year he would find out which talmidim were lefties. For those boys he hole-punched their papers on the right side so that they would be able to fill out the papers comfortably without having the metal clamps interfere with their writing.



THE ANSWER

Regarding use of security cameras, Rav Heinemann paskens that any activity on Shabbos which indirectly causes information to be stored on a computer is permissible, as long as nothing appears on a screen and no lights change color – i.e., nothing detectable by the five human senses occurs. The fact that the information is stored “invisibly” on the computer is not a problem, as the Torah does not forbid “invisible” things. For this reason, a person may walk in front of a video camera on Shabbos, even though it will cause his image to be recorded to a hard drive. Regarding use of the footage it would seem to me that this would create a pirtza which could quickly unravel. Before long, relatives unable to attend a bar mitzvah would watch it motzei Shabbos. Paysach Diskind

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of **Binyomin Nathan Vurgaftman's 21st birthday.**

We are very proud of his success in Torah learning and mitzvot and wishing him all the best in his new Yeshiva!

Eugene and Marina Vurgaftman

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