



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE OFFICE FLOOD

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Please enjoy the following interesting mitzvah dilemma.

Eli was the owner of an office building, and he leased one of the offices to a tenant named Zev. Although Zev paid rent for his office space, he didn't always work there, often preferring to work from home. He would only show up at the office occasionally.

One fateful day, a massive flood occurred, affecting many offices in Eli's building, including Zev's. Many of the offices on the premises became temporarily unusable due to the floodwater. After two arduous weeks, the staff managed to drain the water and repair the offices, returning them to their original condition. Luckily, there was no permanent damage, and after those two



BEAUTY

The woman in Shir Hashirim who represents to Jewish people reminisces how "HaShem brought me into the banquet of wine and His banner of love was upon me" This is a reference to when the Mishkan which is the banquet of Torah, was established, HaShem organized the people in a special encampment where each group of tribes had their own banner. These banners are considered expressions of His love for us. How do we understand the connection of these encampments to His expression of love for us?

This week's Parsha, Bamidbar, discusses the counting of the Jewish people in the Sinai Desert and the organizing of them into four distinct camps. Every three tribes was organized into one camp making a total of four camps. Each camp had their designated location. Yehuda's camp encamped on the East, Reuven's camp encamped on the South and so on. In the center of this square was the Mishkan.

Whose idea was it that we should set our encampment in this formation? The Midrash tells us that when our ancestors stood at Mount Sinai and looked Heavenward they saw how the Presence of HaShem was surrounded by myriads of malachim (angels) divided up into four camps. The people beheld the beauty of this arrangement and yearned to have the same setup.

What is the beauty of this arrangement?

We find beauty when all the components of a complex mixture of items are in their perfect arrangement; each item is placed exactly where it belongs. Consider a magnificent floral garden made up of hundreds of different types of flowers. The beauty of this garden is the organization and placement of each set of flowers to form an overall

weeks, operations were back to normal.

During this period, Zev happened to be working from home and didn't visit the office. Upon his return, he found no trace of the flood incident.

Eli bumped into Zev and casually told him the story of the flood, assuring him that everything had been taken care of and his office was in perfect condition.

Zev then did something surprising. He asked Eli for a refund for half the month's rent because the office was unusable. This caught Eli by surprise. Eli couldn't understand Zev's request, as Zev wasn't aware of the incident and wouldn't have known about it if Eli hadn't informed him. Zev, however, argued that he paid rent for the ability to use the office at any time, which he couldn't have done during the flood.

They agreed to bring this question to a Rav for resolution.

What do you think? Does Eli, the owner, have to give a refund to Zev for the office?

On one hand, Zev was completely oblivious to the flood, and he did not miss any days in the office as a result.

But on the other hand, Zev's office was flooded and unusable for two weeks, so maybe he should get a refund.

The problem is that Man does not have the same beauty of a malach. Man has an ego to feed. He has a Self that is not easily quieted. Even when Man serves HaShem through Torah, Tefillah and Chessed, that service is so often sullied with self interests. While this is the way we are wired and cannot be blamed for it, nevertheless, we cannot shine with the same beauty as the malachim who have no Self to contend with.

So here we have the problem. As we stood by Mount Sinai we beheld the majestic beauty of the encampments of the malachim and we so much wanted it for ourselves. Because of Man's shortcomings of having to contend with his Self, it was not a possibility. Nevertheless, HaShem in His infinite kindness recognized the yearning for this greatness and created for us our own encampment arrangement through which He decorated His Mishkan.

Perhaps the intent of the verse in Shir Hashirim is that although the encampment of our people around the Mishkan was in no way as beautiful as the majestic malachim surrounding HaShem, nevertheless, HaShem granted us that opportunity and placed His Mishkan, His Presence, in the midst of our encampment because of the love He has for us.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind

MITZVA MEME



masterpiece. Using the very same flowers with no order could look quite not appealing. The beauty is when each flower is found in its correct place demonstrating her beauty in sync with those around her.

Using this analogy we can approach an understanding of the beauty of the encampments of the malachim. Every malach has its unique job and mission to accomplish. Each one needs to be in exactly the right location in context to the one next to it and so on. A malach has no Self; it does not recognize itself as having any purpose other than to serve HaShem through the mission that it has been designated for. When our ancestors beheld the myriads of malachim, each one filled with one exclusive motivation; to fulfill the Will of HaShem, organized in a fashion where the splendor of their greatness shined, it was no wonder that they wanted to have that same beauty. We can only fantasize the kedusha and sense of purpose with which those camps of malachim shined.



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE MOLA MOLA

If you've ever gone fishing in a lake or a river, you may be familiar with freshwater sunfish. These fish are typically small, often weighing less than a pound. But have you ever imagined a sunfish species that is much larger than a person? Allow me to introduce you to the Ocean Sunfish, also known as the Mola Mola.

The Mola Mola is one of the world's largest bony fish, native to tropical and temperate waters around the globe. This unique fish's appearance resembles a head without a tail, with its main body laterally flattened. It's often as tall as it is long when its dorsal and ventral fins are fully extended. In German, the sunfish is even called Schwimmender Kopf, or "swimming head," due to its lack of a true tail.

On average, a mature ocean sunfish measures about 10 feet in length, with a fin-to-fin span of approximately 8 feet 2 inches. Typical weights range between 545 and 2,205 pounds, but there are outliers that weigh more than a car. The largest recorded ocean sunfish weighed a staggering 5,100 pounds and measured up to 14 feet from face to tail and 10 feet from back to stomach. This enormous size earns the Mola Mola the title of the world's largest bony fish, outclassing all other species with bones.

When a Mola Mola hatches, it's merely one-tenth of an inch long. By the time it's fully grown, it gains more than 60 million times its initial weight. For comparison, humans typically weigh about 30 times their birth weight as adults.

Ocean sunfish are generalist predators, primarily consuming small fish, fish larvae, squid, and crustaceans. When feeding, sunfish repeatedly suck in and spit out their food, breaking it down into smaller, easier-to-swallow pieces.

Interestingly, female sunfish are highly prolific, capable of producing more eggs than any other known vertebrate—up to 300 million at a time. This gives new insight into why we daven to be fruitful like fish on Rosh Hashana.

Adult sunfish have few natural predators due to their sheer size and thick skin. However, young sunfish are more vulnerable, falling prey to bluefin tuna and mahi mahi, while adults are sometimes consumed by orcas, sharks, and sea lions.

The sunfish's common English name reflects its habit of

sunbathing at the water's surface. **(Pictured top right)** Their protruding dorsal fins, often visible when they swim near the surface, are occasionally mistaken for shark fins. Their sunbathing behavior, however, serves a practical purpose; the fish's skin, which contains large amounts of collagen and can be up to 2 3/4 inches thick, is a home for more than 40 species of parasites. To alleviate this burden, sunfish also bask on their side at the water's surface, inviting seabirds to feed on their skin parasites. Picture the scene. The sunfish needs help cleaning its skin from parasites, so it goes to the surface, lies on its side, and allows birds to pick its skin clean! **(Pictured, bottom right)**

Sunfish also seek help from cleaner wrasses and other fish in temperate region kelp fields, which remove the parasites, much like a car wash.

They've also been known to breach, leaping more than 10 feet out of the water, to dislodge embedded parasites.

Sunbathing also helps the sunfish thermally recharge after hunting in the deepest, coldest parts of the ocean. They often spend half the day basking near the water's surface to reheat their bodies and aid digestion. They are often seen lying on their sides at the surface, presenting their largest profile to the sun. This behavior may be a method of "thermally recharging" after dives into deeper, colder water to hunt for prey.

Ocean sunfish are usually solitary creatures but can occasionally be spotted in pairs. They have been known to live up to ten years in captivity.

Despite their size, ocean sunfish are docile and pose no threat to human divers. If you are ever snorkeling in an area where molas are found, don't be surprised if one comes to check you out. They are not dangerous, just curious. They often approach divers and snorkelers—just to investigate.

Injuries from sunfish are rare, although a slight danger exists from large sunfish leaping out of the water onto boats; in one instance, a sunfish landed on a 4-year-old boy when the fish leaped onto the boy's family's boat.

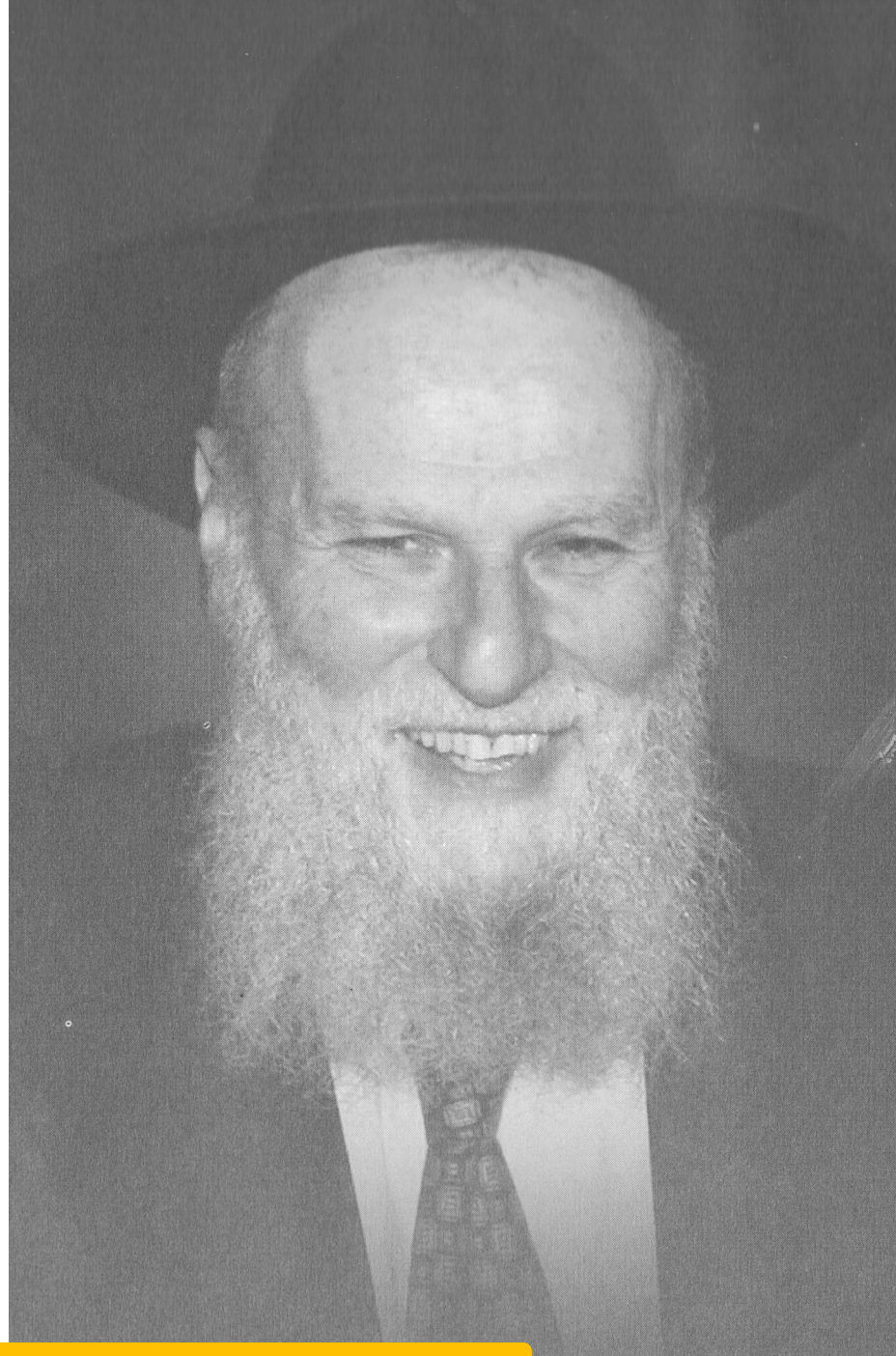
Collisions with sunfish are common in some parts of the world and can cause damage to the hull of a boat, or to the propellers of larger ships, as well as to the fish.

FOR THAT ALONE, IT'S WORTH ALL THE EFFORT

Rav Shlomo Rothenberg was the beloved Rosh Yeshiva of the Mountindale Yeshiva. Toward the end of his life, sadly he was diagnosed with cancer.

As a result of the sickness and medications that dulled his mind, his concentration level was affected, and learning became an arduous task. Despite it all, Rav Shlomo would take out a Chumash or Gemara and attempt, against all odds, to learn the Torah that he so treasured. It was a deeply moving scene to watch Rav Shlomo, so frail and weak, fighting his pain and fatigue in order to learn as much as possible. What is even more inspiring is something he once said to his son, Reb Yitzzy, after learning with him: "The medication makes it hard for me to understand the Gemara, but even so, it's worthwhile for me to try. Because when Mommy sees me learning, it gives her tremendous pleasure and chizuk that I'm feeling well enough to learn... and for that alone, it's worth all the effort."

From "You Made My Life", By R' Nachman Rothenberg, Published By Israel Bookshop,



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question from the Yeshiva administrator at the lower level school, who offered a student the opportunity for both him and his friend (who was unable to gain admission to a Yeshiva) to attend if he accepts, Rav Chaim Kanievsky answered as follows. It's said in Mishlei (16,7), "When a man's ways please Hashem, even his enemies will make peace with him." The Yerushalmi (Terumos 8:3) says that the enemies here refer to the Yetzer Hara. Rav Chaim therefore said that in this case, it means if the student does the chesed (kindness) of helping his friend, both of their yetzer haras (evil inclinations) will be greatly diminished and both will have much more success in their learning. (From Rav Chaim, By R' Naftali Weinberger, page 142)

In appreciation of Rabbi Menachem and Rebbetzin Brocha Goldberger
By Steve and Simcha Schwarz

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