

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



DAY OLD NEWS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Once there was a man named Eli who had a subscription to a daily newspaper. One day, to his surprise, when he took the newspaper out of his mailbox, it was yesterday's newspaper! This went on day after day for a whole month - Eli would go to the mailbox and find yesterday's paper.

He called up the newspaper publisher and told them about the problem, but the newspaper publisher said they had never heard of such a problem. They promised to make sure the delivery person brought the correct day's paper. But still, day after day, Eli kept receiving the previous day's news. Understandably, Eli was very frustrated at always getting the news a day late.

One day Eli decided he had enough, and was going to get to the bottom of this. He set up a camera outside of his house to see what was happening. After reviewing



THE SHINE

On the Shabbos preceding Tisha b'Av, known as Shabbos Chazon, there are two diverging customs. There are some communities that will wear at least one piece of their weekday clothing to remember the loss of our Temple. Other communities, actually most other communities, wear their complete Shabbos outfit. The reason for the latter is because Shabbos ought not be downgraded because of our mourning. What is interesting, however, is that the tune used in reading the Haftorah is the melancholy chant of the Eicha.

Why would the communities who are sensitive to the honor of Shabbos read the Haftorah in this sad chant?

The gifts of holiness and illumination with which HaShem endowed His people are forever with us. Nothing HaShem gifts can ever fade or go away. There is nevertheless a seeming diminishing of these gifts as we endure the golus. The Sefas Emes explains that so long as these gifts were apparent and were visible on the faces of HaShem's people no nation could ever subject us. Similar to the tefillin regarding which the Torah states that "The nations shall see the Name of HaShem upon you and they will fear you" so it was with the other gifts with which HaShem blessed His people. All of HaShem's gifts to us were evident and were reflected in us and the nations saw them and feared us. This includes

the footage, Eli discovered that each day while he was away at Shacharis, his neighbor came over, took the brand new paper that had just been delivered, and switched it with yesterday's paper from his own home! Eli had caught his neighbor red-handed.

Later, Eli went to his neighbor's house and confronted him about the newspaper switch. First, Eli asked the neighbor to please stop doing the switch going forward. Additionally, Eli requested that the neighbor pay him back for the past six weeks of old newspapers that Eli had unfairly received.

In response, the neighbor argued that he didn't owe Eli any money. He pointed out that while he had taken Eli's newspapers, he had given them back to Eli the very next day. The neighbor referenced a teaching from the Gemara that states that if a person steals chametz before Pesach, and returns it after Pesach, they do not have to pay for the chametz even though it can no longer be eaten. "Just as with the chametz, I returned your papers - so why should I pay you?" argued the neighbor.

Eli was now faced with a dilemma - did he have a right to demand payment for the switched newspapers? Or was the neighbor correct that by returning them a day later, he no longer owed him anything?

What do you think?

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the gift of Shabbos as well.

This is the intent of how our Sages explain the verse in Eicha 1:7 "Her enemies saw her (the Jewish people in exile) and they laughed at her Shabbos's ." Eicha is contrasting the mournful state of our people with how our enemies laughed at us even on Shabbos. The basis of this contrast is because Shabbos was a most incredible gift that HaShem endowed His people with. When we lived in our state in the proximity of the Temple, the face of the Jew shined on the day of Shabbos. His extra neshama revealed itself in its apparent glow. It was that shine which the nations of the world feared just like the tefillin. But now, alas, in our degraded state that glow no longer shines, it is no longer visible to the nations. Hence, they can actually laugh at us in our face on our Shabbos's.

The Sefas Emes points out, however, that even though those gifts of HaShem no longer shine, they are nevertheless very much part of us, they are what we are made of. They cannot be taken away. They can be sullied and covered but they remain very much part of us.

The communities who are accustomed to wearing their Shabbos finery on Shabbos Chazon do not wish to downgrade the specialness of Shabbos. However, they do want to remind themselves that even with our Shabbos finery we still lack the true finery of Shabbos with her incredible shine from the kedusha which HaShem endowed us with. To remember that, it has been customary to chant the Haftorah to the sad tunes of Eicha.

Have a wonderful Shabbos, a mournful Tisha b'Av and may we soon greet Moshiach tzidkeinu.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE ASIAN SHEEPSHEAD WRASSE

Look at the amazing picture above. Look at that fish's head. Its lips, and its eyes. What is this? Meet the mysterious Asian sheepshead wrasse.

The Asian sheepshead wrasse is native to the western Pacific Ocean around Korea, China, Japan, and the Ogasawara Islands. It is one of the largest species of wrasse. It can reach 100 cm (39 in) in total length. The greatest recorded weight for this species is 14.7 kg (32 lb). This fish can live for over 30 years, and some have even lived to reach 40. The wrasse inhabits rocky reef areas in its native range. It is an omnivorous fish. It eats both animals and plants. Its diet includes oysters, small fish, clams, shellfish, crustaceans, and blue crabs. It also includes chironomid (midges) larvae, zooplankton, and polychaetes.

Their most noticeable feature is the enormous hump on their head. In fact, it is called Kobudai in Japanese, which literally means the swollen fish. This unique feature can only be seen in adults. What is the purpose of the hump? The distinctive hump protruding from the forehead of the Asian sheepshead wrasse is hypothesized to contain a specialized swim bladder. This internal gas-filled organ helps the fish control its buoyancy, allowing it to hover and stay neutrally suspended in the water column. This feature suits the wrasse's feeding behavior, as it often picks invertebrates off the complex reef structure. The swim bladder's buoyancy regulation prevents the wrasse from constantly sinking or floating while foraging.

What makes the species even more visually striking, is their sharp teeth. What is fascinating is that not only do they have teeth near their lips, they also have teeth inside their throat. Located in the throat or pharynx, the Asian sheepshead wrasse possesses molar-like teeth designed to crush and grind food. These pharyngeal teeth act like a second set of jaws, processing shelled organisms too tough for the teeth in the mouth alone to handle. The strength and positioning of these interior teeth allow wrasses to consume hardy prey like clams, crabs, and sea urchins.

Why do they have such large lips? The prominent lips of the Asian sheepshead wrasse are muscular and can form a tight seal on hard-shelled mollusks like clams, allowing the fish to suction them open. This morphology equips them to feed on heavily armored bivalve prey other fish cannot consume. Their powerful jaws and molar-like teeth then crack open the shell to access the soft meat inside.

They appear intimidating and aggressive due to their large set of teeth and huge size. They are not, however, dangerous to humans. In fact, despite the scary look, the Kobudai is extremely friendly and harmless to humans. There's an Asian sheepshead wrasse (named Yoriko) who has been friends with Japanese divers for 25 years.

Compared to the adults, the young Asian sheepshead wrasses have a totally different appearance. They lack the chins, the enormous humps on the head, and the teeth. Moreover, they are orange in color instead of pink.

Kobudai live a solitary life. They are on their own, swim-

ming around coral reef seas and preying on marine creatures. Like other solitary species, they only meet other fish in the breeding season.

Kobudai fish are mostly eaten by larger predators such as sharks. Because the fish are not poisonous, they are often hunted for their flesh by humans due to its light taste and flavor, especially in China, Japan, and Korea. This species is valued for its sweet, shellfish-like taste. (I see fins and scales, do you think it's Kosher?)

The Asian sheepshead wrasse engages in cleaning symbiosis where it grooms other reef fish by removing dead skin, mucus, and parasitic organisms like isopods and copepods. This cleaning behavior keeps other fish healthy and free of disease. In turn, the wrasse gets an easy meal. This mutually beneficial relationship between cleaner wrasses and reef fish helps maintain the overall health and biodiversity of fragile coral reef ecosystems.

The Asian sheepshead wrasse produces a thick, slimy mucus coating its scales and skin. Research indicates this mucus contains special properties that prevent bacterial infection and also reduce drag from water resistance. The antibacterial compounds in the mucus likely protect the wrasse from diseases on the reef. The antifouling properties keep the mucus slippery, allowing the fish to swim faster and more efficiently.

This wrasse has stones in its ears! Otoliths, also known as ear stones or ear bones, are calcium carbonate deposits in the inner ear of bony fishes. They function for balance and hearing. In many species, otoliths accrete annual rings as the fish ages, much like tree rings. By extracting a wrasse's otoliths and counting these concentric rings, scientists can estimate the age of individual fish. It provides valuable data for population studies.

The Asian sheepshead wrasse is an impressive species that makes for an exciting aquarium exhibit. Their large size and prominent hump draw interest from visitors. However, caring for these fish poses major challenges. Wrasse can grow over 3 feet long and require immense tanks with powerful filtration. Their diet of hard-shelled invertebrates like urchins and clams is difficult to replicate in captivity. The expense of feeding and housing these giants makes long-term husbandry prohibitive for most public aquariums. Despite their draw for guests, keeping Asian sheepshead wrasses alive for over 5 years remains an elusive goal.

In old Hawaiian culture, fishermen held the sheepshead wrasse in high esteem, reserving it for royalty. They bestowed the title "king of the reef" upon this fish and enacted "kapu laws" forbidding commoners from eating it. Only high-ranking chiefs (Ali'i in Hawaiian) and priests (Kahuna (!) in Hawaiian, in fact in Maori, Tahitian, and Samoan, Kahuna means priest as well) could consume the wrasse's treasured flesh. Fishermen took great care to release any caught wrasse unharmed.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous creation!

TORAH IN THE ZOO

Several times on Chol HaMoed, the Kanievsky children asked Rav Chaim to take them to the zoo. Rav Chaim, who preferred to stay home, initially asked if the Rebbetzin could take them in his place. The children reminded him of the opportunity to recite the berachah of Meshaneh HaBriyos. Rav Chaim said that if it is so meaningful for the children to spend time with him, in conjunction with making the berachah, he would gladly take the family.

One Chol HaMoed Pesach, as they made their way through the animal and bird enclosures, Rav Chaim cited references from Chazal about each creature they saw. After a while, a large group of Bnei Brak residents had gathered around Rav Chaim to hear him summarize the various Midrashim and Yerushalmis that discuss each species. Other visitors noticed and came closer to see what was happening. Pretty soon, Rav Chaim was leading a huge crowd through the zoo as an inadvertent spiritual tour guide, teaching the Torah related to each animal!

From Rav Chaim, By R' Naftali Weinberger, Published By Artscroll, and Reprinted with Their Permission



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the soft-hearted thief, Rav Zilberstein wrote as follows. Normally there is a prohibition to accept money from a thief. But Rav Zilberstein says that this is only lechatchila. But bideved, after the fact, once the mother has the money she is allowed to keep it. This is for two reasons. One: we do not know for sure that the money received was stolen. Perhaps it came from the thief's own money that was not stolen. And two, we have a concept of yush and shinui reshus, that would allow the money to be kept. Regarding the question of the camera, from two weeks ago, this question was also asked to Rav Mordechai Shuchatowitz of the Baltimore Bais Din. Rav Shuchatowitz answered as follows. The person who borrowed the camera is liable to the school because she was poshea, negligent in handling it over to others without the owner's permission. And the person who dropped the camera is also liable to the borrower for the damage even though it was unintended damages.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated by Yakov and Esther Krug in honor of the yartzeit of Esther's mother

טויבל בת אברהם אליהו ז"ל

May the merit of this great mitzvah bring an aliyah to her neshama



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