

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE WEDDING SUIT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha discusses the prohibition for Jews not to intermarry, and how a Jew must marry a fellow Jew. This leads us to the following true story.

There was a man named Yoni who was engaged to be married. He began his wedding preparations by visiting a high-end suit store, where an expensive suit caught his eye.

He spoke with the store owner, Aaron, expressing his interest in the suit. However, he wished to take the suit home to try it on and evaluate how it looked. Aaron agreed, on one condition: if Yoni wore the suit outside, he was bound to purchase it.

Yoni consented, promising to pay for the suit if he decided to wear it. A few days later, he returned the expensive suit to



RETURNING SHEEP & THE POWER OF PRAYER

This Shabbos is referred to as Shabbos Nachamu which means the Shabbos of consoling because the haftorah that is read is Yishayahu's words of consolation to his people. In this prophecy HaShem tells His people that although they suffered so much, those days will end. Just as the shepherd gathers all his sheep so too, will HaShem bring back all His sheep. And those sheep that are unable to walk, HaShem will carry them close to Him. This haftorah is always read the Shabbos following Tisha b'Av, the day marking our farthest distance from HaShem's benevolence, the day on which we rejected Him in the desert and the day that He allowed His Temple to be destroyed.

The rule is that the haftorah relates in some way to the Torah reading which precedes the haftorah. We should therefore expect to find some indication of consolation in the Torah reading as well.

Our Parsha, Ve'eschanan, begins with Moshe's pleading with HaShem to allow him to enter the Land. Our Sages teach that 515 prayers were prayed by Moshe to HaShem with this request until HaShem finally instructed him to stop. The implication is that if Moshe had prayed one more prayer, HaShem would have been compelled to allow him in. The power of prayer is that great.

the store, stating that he had decided against purchasing it. Aaron questioned him, asking, "Are you certain you didn't wear it?" To this, Yoni confidently replied that he had not.

Aaron, still suspicious that it was worn, suggested a rental option. If Yoni had worn the suit but didn't want to keep it, they could agree to a rental fee of 600 shekels. Despite this offer, Yoni assured Aaron that there was no need, insisting that he had not used the suit at all.

As Aaron began to replace the suit on the store rack, he noticed an unusual, bulky item in the jacket pocket. Upon inspection, he discovered an envelope. Inside this envelope was a thousand shekels in cash and a note that read, "To our precious Chasan, use this money to help you build a Bayis Ne'eman Beyisrael, a loyal house in Israel."

To Aaron, this seemed like incontrovertible proof that Yoni had worn the suit for his wedding and was trying to avoid paying for it. Aaron contemplated keeping 600 shekels from the envelope, equivalent to the owed rental fee, and returning the remainder.

However, he faced a moral dilemma: he lacked definitive proof that Yoni had actually worn the suit for his wedding. While it seemed highly likely, there was a slim chance that Yoni had placed the envelope in the suit pocket without wearing the suit to the wedding. Left with this conundrum, the question remained: was Aaron entitled to keep the money or not?

What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Shemos Page 347



When contemplating the idea of Moshe's incessant praying to be allowed to enter we must wonder what our Sages teach us about prayer. The Tur, the great halachic authority from which the Shulchan bases his decisions, writes in OH 98 that any prayer prayed properly is never turned away empty; it will be answered. We understand that we might get the matter for what we are praying but in some other situation those prayers will help us.

There is no question that the 515 prayers that Moshe prayed were prayed with the greatest sincerity and in the most proper manner and in spite of that every prayer was rejected; he was not allowed to enter. Is it not a wonder where those prayers will be used? When will they be used? For who will they be used?

The Zohar teaches us (see Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, Bamidbar 11:12) that the neshama of each member of Klal Yisroel that left Egypt was rooted in the neshama of Moshe Rabbeinu. This meant that when Moshe was davening that he be allowed to enter, his tefilla was that the root of every Jew's neshama should be allowed entry. Naturally, he was requesting that he bring his people into the Land personally. This request was rejected. However, perhaps the return of all the members of Klal Yisroel that will be recognized with the coming of Moshiach, soon in our days, will be the accomplishment of all those tefillos of Moshe.

Perhaps the connection between Vaeschanan and her haftorah is that the seeds of Yishayhu's prophecy of our return were planted in the tefillos that Moshe davened in our Parsha.

May we merit to see the fulfillment of Yishayahu's prophecies very soon.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

BIRDS OF BALTIMORE: THE STARLING

Let's continue our exploration of the fascinating birds of Baltimore. Have you ever seen large groups of blackbirds in Baltimore? It's easy to assume those are crows or ravens, but crows and ravens are really large birds, some nearly 2 feet long. The smaller black birds are called Starlings.

Starlings are highly gregarious small birds, about 8 inches long and weighing only 2-3 ounces. They have a lifespan of about 10 years in the wild. They are black with metallic-looking iridescent plumage, with white spots.

They are cavity nesters that build nests in holes of trees, buildings, birdhouses, or even in the ground. Female starlings lay 4-6 eggs per clutch which hatch after about 12 days. Young starlings fledge after 21 days and are independent after 30 days.

Starlings are omnivorous and eat insects, fruit, seeds, and even small animals like lizards. They sometimes steal eggs and chicks from the nests of other bird species. Adult common starlings are hunted by hawks and the peregrine falcon. The common starling moves by walking or running, rather than hopping. Common starlings on migration can fly at 37-50 mph and cover up to 620-930 miles.

Starlings often form large flocks called murmurations. Murmurations can contain millions of birds flying in beautiful, coordinated, swirling aerial displays, changing shape and direction as they move. Sometimes they make breathtaking huge shapes, and sometimes the shapes of murmuration take the shape of giant birds! (pictured above.) Murmurations may confuse predators and make it harder for individual birds to be targeted. They may also help them to stay warm at night.

Starlings are very social and vocal birds with a wide range of calls. The common starling is noisy, its song consisting of a wide variety of both melodic and mechanical-sounding noises as part of a ritual succession of sounds. Females appear to prefer mates with more complex songs, perhaps because this indicates greater experience or longevity. Having a complex song is also useful in defending a territory and deterring less experienced males from encroaching. They are excellent mimics, imitating other bird calls and even human voices. They sometimes mimic car alarms to get attention. A group of starlings in a city can be extremely noisy.

The large size of flocks can also cause problems. Common starlings may be sucked into aircraft jet engines, one of the worst instances of this being an incident in Boston in 1960 when sixty-two people died after a turboprop airliner flew into a flock and plummeted into the sea at Winthrop Harbor. The large roosts of the common starling pose many safety hazards for aircraft, including the clogging of engines that consequently force planes to descend. From the years 1990-2001, 852 incidents of aircraft hazards due to starlings and blackbirds were reported with 39 strikes causing major damage that cost a total of \$1,607,317.

Huge urban roosts in cities can create problems due to the noise and mess

made and the smell of the droppings. In 1949, so many starlings landed on the clock hands of London's Big Ben that it actually slowed one of the clocks by four and half minutes. This led to unsuccessful attempts to disrupt the roosts with netting, repellent chemicals on the ledges, and broadcasts of common starling alarm calls.

In addition to the problems cited above, they are considered an invasive species as they compete with native birds. What is fascinating, though, is that a lot of these problems may have been man-made. Starlings were introduced to North America in 1890 by conservationists who wanted all birds mentioned in Shakespeare's plays to be in the US. Here is the complete story.

Schieffelin was a wealthy drug manufacturer and avid Shakespeare enthusiast living in New York City. He was also one of the founding members of the American Acclimatization Society, which aimed to introduce European flora and fauna to North America. The Schieffelin family was one of the oldest families in Manhattan.

In 1890, Schieffelin released 60-100 starlings in Central Park in New York City. He had imported the birds from England, where starlings are native. His goal was to establish in the U.S. all the bird species mentioned in Shakespeare's plays.

The starling population grew exponentially thanks to an abundance of food sources and lack of natural predators. Today, over 200 million starlings live across North America, causing agricultural damage and displacing some native cavity-nesting birds.

While well-intentioned, Schieffelin's starling introduction is considered one of the most disastrous bird introductions in history, demonstrating unforeseen ecological consequences.

Despite its status as a pest, it is important as they help control insect populations. Starlings play an important ecological role, controlling pests and spreading seeds.

They are also greatly enjoyed by people. Their iridescent plumage and stunning aerial displays make them beautiful birds enjoyed by bird-watchers.

Starlings are intelligent birds that have used tools such as sticks and stones to obtain food. Starlings can recognize individual human faces and are adept vocal learners. Mozart had a pet Common Starling which could sing part of his Piano Concerto in G Major. He had bought it from a shop after hearing it sing a phrase from a work he wrote six weeks previously, which had not yet been performed in public. He became very attached to the bird and arranged an elaborate funeral for it when it died three years later.

They are hardy birds, able to survive cold winters and hot summers. Starlings adapt well to diverse habitats like forests, grasslands, cities, and farmland.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous creation!

BUILDING MATERIALS

The great advocate for Klal Yisrael, Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, would often say, "Ribbono Shel Olam, what does it take to build a building? Some iron, some stones, and some water. Well, we have plenty of each of those ingredients.

'Iron?' Look at the ironclad resilience of Klal Yisrael. We have been tested time and time again, and we have remained steadfast and strong like iron. So many have tried to force us to bend our ways and we have not bent one iota.

'Stone?' Nebach, Ribbono Shel Olam, there have been those who have not been able to withstand the suffering, and their hearts have turned to stone. They have tried, but the challenges have been too great; their soft and sensitive hearts have been transformed into stone.

'Water?' Oy vey, how many tears have been shed throughout our long and bitter galus? How many broken hearts have cried rivers and oceans of tears? How many tears have been spilled over the tragedies of our brothers and sisters? '

So You see You have everything You need.' Then what are You waiting for?"

The following story is told of how the Beis HaLevi agreed to accept the position of Rav in Brisk: When they first sent R' Yosef Dov (Rav Yoshe Ber) a ksav rabbanus, he did not want to accept it and gave all sorts of excuses for his negative answer. The heads of the community of Brisk begged him to come, trying a number of different approaches, but he refused, until finally, one of them got up and said with passion, "Rebbe, twenty-five thousand Jews are sitting and waiting for you in Brisk! How can you turn them away empty-handed?" This plea made such an impression on the Beis HaLevi that he accepted the position on the spot. When this story reached the ears of the holy Chofetz Chaim in Radin, he began to cry, saying, "If only Klal Yisrael would await the Mashiach like those twenty-five thousand Jews did for Rav Yoshe Ber, he would come immediately. Like Rav Yoshe Ber, he would not turn them away empty-handed. But unfortunately, we are just not awaiting him as we should."

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the newspaper, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein wrote that it would not be sufficient to simply return the newspaper, because the whole purpose of news is to know what is new, what is current. Therefore, he would have to pay for all of the papers that he took, even though he returned them the next day.

This weeks TableTalk is dedicated to the iluy neshama of

יואל בן מיכאל הלוי ז"ל
מיכאל בן יעקב צבי הלוי ז"ל
פראדל בת אברהם ז"ל



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