

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



RIDING IN STYLE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha discusses the mitzvah of keeping Shabbos which leads us to the following true story.

Akiva, a young rabbi just out of rabbinical school, was starting a new job in Manhattan. It was a small synagogue, and as he began to meet the members of his community, he learned that two of the people in the synagogue would drive to shul every Shabbos.

Akiva decided to speak to them. Larry was one of the men that drove to the shul. Akiva went to his house and told him about the importance of keeping Shabbos and how driving to shul on Shabbos was actually a mitzvah haba be'aveira, committing a transgression by doing a mitzvah. Larry listened and said, "You know, I never missed a minyan in my entire life. Do you want me to stop coming to shul because I can't walk to shul? Do you want me to break my streak of never missing a minyan? And furthermore, I live in a neighborhood that's filled with non-Jews. If I stop coming to shul, I feel like my Judaism will just wither away. Do you want me to lose my Judaism?" That was the argument Larry made, and Akiva felt like he wasn't going to be convinced.



THE TALE OF TWO PLANES

Our Sages teach the following insight. When Moshe asked our people in the Name of HaShem if they would accept the Torah and they replied "Na'aseh v'nishma", that "we will do whatever He expects of us and only then will we listen to what He commands", they achieved a level equivalent to HaShem's ministering angels. This insight is difficult to understand.

What is the intent of such a statement? How can one perform before listening to the instructions? Before one knows what is expected of him, how can he fulfill it? Furthermore, how is this associated with ministering angels?

To answer the first question we must explain the second part of their statement to mean "after we perform we will understand why we must perform this". However, how does this associate with angels?

Before we can understand anything about angels we must appreciate that they exist in a plane of existence where the intellect is the reality. In the world that we currently live in, reality is expressed in three dimensional objects and anything that is purely intellect is referred to as 'abstract' with the connotation that it does not really exist. However, there is a plane where intellect is reality and three dimensional objects are absurd! (It should be pointed out that our current plane is actually not the real world. It is the plane of intellect that really exists. That is the plane that exists eternally.)

Then Akiva went to the next man, David. Again, Akiva told David about the importance of Shabbos and how he shouldn't drive on Shabbos. David said it was the year of mourning for his father, and he committed to every single minyan in honor of his father. Did the rabbi want him to miss the minyan that he committed to for his father?

Akiva heard their arguments and realized he wasn't going to convince them. So, he had an idea. He realized that driving a car on Shabbos is likely a Torah prohibition, but riding a horse and buggy is only a rabbinical prohibition. In Manhattan, there are horses and buggies. Akiva remembered the famous story from Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, who convinced people working on Shabbos to use their left hand instead of their right hand, so that it would be a rabbinical prohibition instead of a Torah prohibition. So, Akiva surmised that here too he would have them do a rabbinical prohibition instead of a Torah prohibition. Akiva told David and Larry that he was going to arrange for a horse and buggy to pick them up on Shabbos.

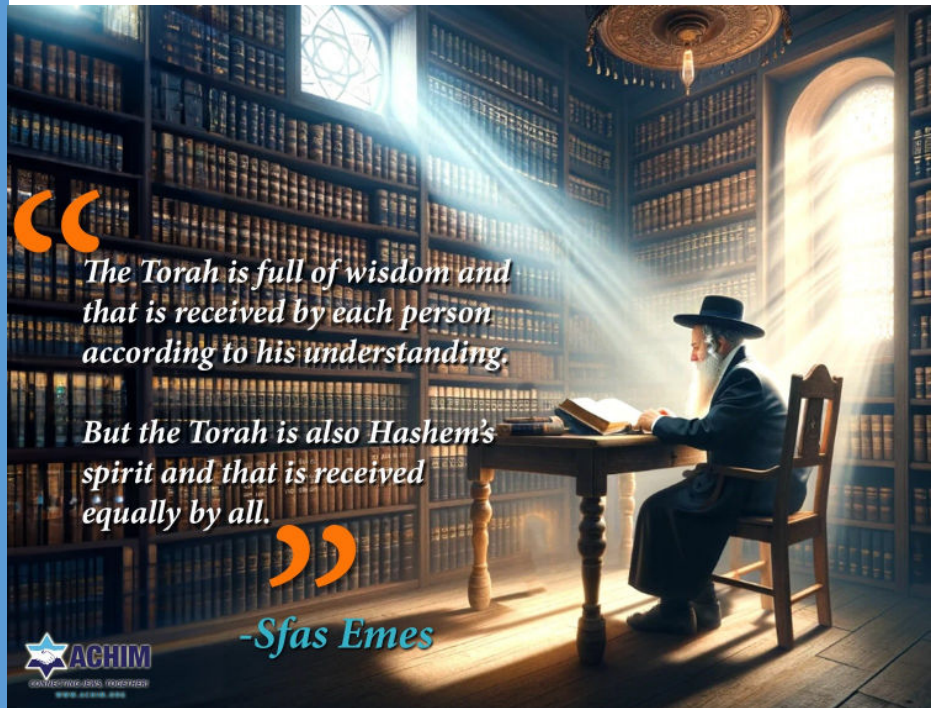
Lo and behold, that week, a horse and buggy stopped at each of their houses and took them to shul. The whole shul watched as these two men came to shul on Shabbos with the horse and buggy, and people thought it was fascinating.

The next week, Akiva came to the shul and saw that there were four people who now took the buggy. He asked the two additional people why they went on the buggy instead of walking. They said, "Well, we realized that the buggy goes right in front of our house. Now that the rabbi allows these other two people to go on a buggy on Shabbos, we figured we should also be able to go."

Akiva realized that he might have caused a bigger problem than he was trying to solve. So, he brought this two-part question to Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein: 1) Did he do the right thing by having them ride a horse and buggy in order to minimize driving on Shabbos? and 2) Now that four people started to go in the buggy, what should he do? Should he cancel the entire thing, or should he let it go?

What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 251



Therefore, for angels which are beings of pure intellect, their reality is their knowledge, that is their existence. To 'know' is to exist. Before a being has any knowledge of self, in that plane, that being is non-existent. There is another important factor to understand. Ministering angels exist only to serve. There is no existence if there is no service. Once their service is completed they cease to exist, unless there is yet another job to be done. In any event, before they serve they are non-existent. Their existence is their service.

Given these axioms, the Malbim explains that angels only come into existence when they are accomplishing their mission. The moment before their mission begins they do not exist. Therefore, he explains, angels must precede action to understanding because their existence

only becomes a reality when they perform. Only then can they understand what they are doing. In effect, their performance and their knowledge occur simultaneously, with the initial cause being their performance.

This rationale does not exist in the human condition because Man exists even before he is given a mission. In fact, after he is given a mission, he continues to exist even if he refuses to perform it! Our existence is independent of anything we decide to do.

When our ancestors proclaimed that we will perform and then understand, they were subjecting their very existence to the performance of HaShem's Will. They were proclaiming that they will not have understanding before their performance. Their very existence will occur with their submission to HaShem's Will. With "na'aseh v'nishma" our very existence became tied to our complete submission to the Will of HaShem!

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

HEALTHY TEETH, HEALTHY BODY

This week's Parsha discusses how if a person knocks out the tooth of his servant, he must set him free. Let's explore why the health of our teeth is so important, and how our oral health affects our overall health.

It is often easy to think that our teeth are separate from our body, and if we don't care for them, it will only affect our teeth. But the truth is that our teeth are very much connected to the rest of our body, and an infection or bacteria in our teeth or gums can send bacteria to all parts of our body, including our heart and brain. Let's look at this together

The Connection Between Oral and General Health. Oral health significantly impacts general health, acting as an indicator for potential systemic diseases like heart disease and diabetes. The mouth serves as a "window" to the body's overall condition, reflecting one's health beyond just dental concerns. Conditions like diabetes can worsen or be signaled by oral health problems. Gum disease can affect blood sugar control, posing risks for those with diabetes or increasing the risk of developing diabetes. Scientists have also found links between gum disease and a range of systemic health issues, including respiratory conditions, and even pregnancy complications.

The Connection Between Oral and Cardiovascular Health. Recent research shows a strong connection between oral health, especially gum disease, and cardiovascular health, the health of our heart. This relationship mainly revolves around the idea that inflammation in the gums can have effects beyond the mouth. When gums are inflamed, the bacteria responsible for this condition can enter the bloodstream and reach the heart, contributing to cardiovascular conditions. This can increase the risk of heart disease, including plaque buildup in the arteries, which can restrict blood flow and lead to heart attacks or strokes. Additionally, the presence of oral bacteria in the bloodstream can trigger a systemic inflammatory response, which plays a role in the development and progression of cardiovascular diseases.

The Connection Between Oral Health and Memory. Studies have found a fascinating link between oral health and cognitive

function, particularly in memory preservation as we age. Good oral hygiene and preventing gum disease are important for maintaining cognitive health, including memory. This link is mainly due to systemic inflammation and bacteria from poor oral health, which can negatively affect the brain. Inflammation from gum disease may contribute to cognitive decline, including dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Bacteria from the mouth can enter the bloodstream or even the brain, leading to inflammation or direct damage to brain tissues. People with gum disease tend to perform worse on memory and cognitive tests than those with healthy gums. Maintaining good oral hygiene—regular brushing, flossing, and dental check-ups—can help reduce the risk of gum disease and possibly slow down memory loss or cognitive decline, contributing to better brain health in later years.

Dreams and Dental Health. The connection between our brain and our teeth goes the other way as well. There is an interesting link between our dreams and oral health, focusing on how stressful dreams can affect our teeth. Stressful or anxiety-inducing dreams can lead to an increase in saliva production. While saliva is essential for oral health, too much of it, especially if it's more acidic, can harm our teeth. This increased acidity can lead to enamel erosion over time, making the teeth more prone to decay and sensitivity.

The Role of Teeth in Speaking and Singing. Teeth are crucial not just for digestion but also for articulation and vocal expression. Our teeth's alignment and form significantly impact our pronunciation and how we form words and sounds. The movement of the tongue and lips against the teeth shapes the sound waves, allowing us to articulate consonants and vowels clearly. Moreover, teeth contribute to our voice's distinctive timbre, affecting pitch, resonance, and clarity in singing. Thus, healthy and well-aligned teeth are important for both eating and communication, showing the interconnectedness of oral health and vocal abilities. If a person were to lose a tooth or two, it could affect their voice and ability to sing.

A PERSON NEEDS NOT JUST TO HAVE GOOD MIDDOS, BUT TO BE A BAAL MIDDOS

In the Rosh HaYeshiva, Rav Aharon Schechter's bungalow in Camp Morris, there was an Israeli bachur who was at the Rosh HaYeshiva's seudah on Shabbos. The Rosh Yeshiva asked him to sing a zemer l'chvod Shabbos.

The bachur refused the offer.

The Rosh Yeshiva asked why not. The bachur said that he has busha.

When pressed more by the Rosh Yeshiva, the bachur said that busha is a good middah, the middah of Yitzchok Avinu, so why was the Rosh Yeshiva giving him a hard time?

The Rosh Yeshiva responded, "A person needs not just to have good middos, but to be a Baal middos. The word baal means a master. If you cannot forgo your busha for the sake of kavod Shabbos, that means you may have the middah of busha, but you did not acquire it through avodah. You must be a baalim on your middos!"



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about smashing the getaway car with cinder blocks, Rabbi Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 251) wrote that he did not have to pay the owner of the car. This is because the man was performing the mitzvah of stopping the thieves from doing a great sin. (Lehafrish es haganavim mechot chamur) Since he was doing the mitzvah of stopping thieves, it was the equivalent of him being "Onus al pi hadibur," which means he was compelled by the mitzvah.

This week's Table Talk is dedicated to our parents' memories,
Mr. and Mrs. Leonard and Lena Tannenbaum
Mr. and Mrs. Willy and Sofie Prager
whose yahrtzeits are at this time of year.
Mr and Mrs Avi and Chava Esther Tannenbaum



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