

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



CASH IN THE TRASH

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Parsha, Moshe and Betzalel are entrusted to care for a great deal of money and valuables. This leads us to the following true story.

There was once a man named Avi Berger who borrowed 1000 shekels from Yoni, a man in his neighborhood. After a month, when the loan was due, Avi was going to pay back the money.

Avi called Yoni and said, "I have the money; when can I bring it over?". Yoni replied, "You know what, I'm super busy today. I won't be at the house, but please leave the money in an envelope in my mailbox." Avi asked, "Are you sure that's safe? Maybe someone could steal it." Yoni said, "No, the mailbox is very deep, and no one will be able to reach the money. It's fine; you can leave the money there. I will look out for it."

When Avi wanted to drop off the money, he couldn't find an envelope to put the cash in. He didn't want to delay paying the loan



THE LIGHTHOUSE

Our Sages teach that the neshama of the Jew is a part of the entirety of HaShem. There is a principle in this world that the particle is attracted to the whole. This is the basis why gravity pulls material to the earth. All particles are based on earth and therefore they naturally go towards the Earth. Given this principle Malbim wonders on a verse in Shir Hashirim in which the neshama turns to HaShem and says "I am to my Beloved and to me is His yearning." The neshama is implying that she belongs to HaShem (her beloved) and to her is HaShem's yearning.

The Malbim wonders why is HaShem drawn to the neshama; HaShem is the whole and it is the particle that should be drawn to the whole, not the reverse?

In answering this question, the Malbim illustrates a fascinating story of a great king who has a most incredible diamond.

There are precious stones when cut properly, they are able to receive a small ray of light and then reflect it in so many ways that it actually gives more light than it received.

This king had many such stones and wanted to demonstrate how perfectly cut they were. He took his stones and placed them in a box which he covered. In the cover there was a small slit in which he was going to shine his light. He then took this box and placed it into a large windowless room which had only a small crack through which he was going to shine his ray of light.

After placing his precious stones into this very dark environment he shined his ray

though. So he found an old wedding invitation envelope and put the money in that envelope and sealed it with tape. Avi walked over to Yoni's apartment and dropped the envelope with the 1000 shekels cash in the mailbox.

That day, Yoni's wife opened the mailbox and saw an envelope in it. She read the envelope; it was an old wedding invitation envelope and it had an address and the name "Avi Berger" on it. Assuming it was a mistake because there was another Avi who lived in her apartment building, Yoni's wife went upstairs to apartment 10 and put the envelope in this other Avi's mailbox.

Later that day, the owner of apartment 10, Avi Weinberger, saw the envelope in his mailbox. He noticed it had a different last name and assumed it was a mistake, so he threw the envelope out in the garbage. Soon after, the garbage was collected and the cash in the envelope was lost forever.

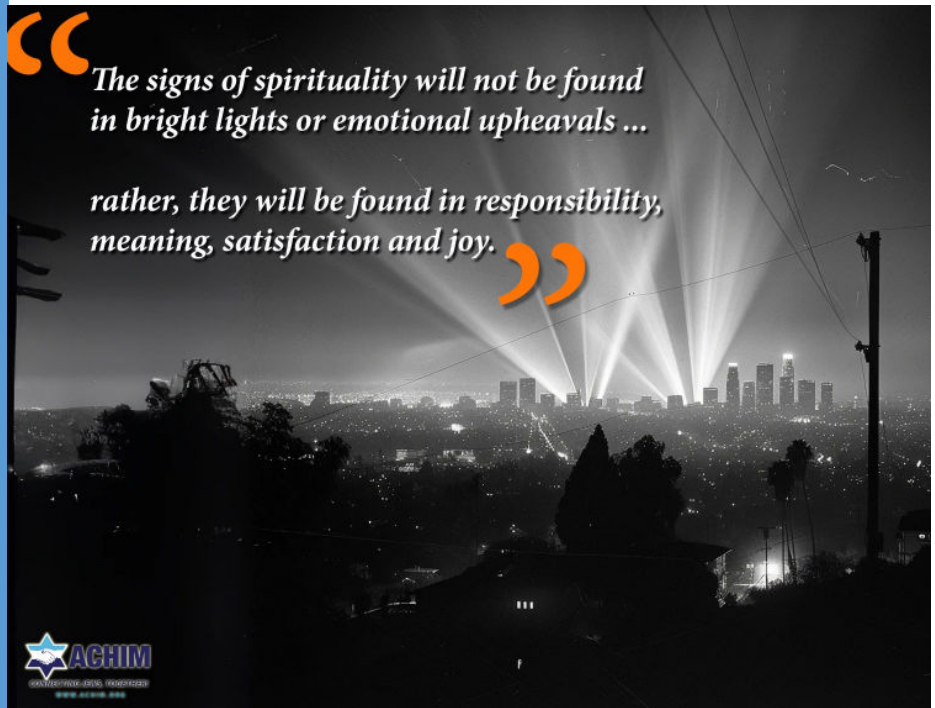
Later, that day, when Yoni inquired about the envelope, he learned from his wife that she had moved the envelope to someone else's apartment. Further inquiry revealed that Avi Weinberger, the second Avi, threw the envelope in the garbage and thus the money was lost.

In this case, four people made serious mistakes of judgment. But the question is, which mistake was the one that made them liable for the loss of the money?

Is it Yoni's fault for suggesting to leave it in the mailbox, a place that is not completely secure? Is it Avi's fault because he put the money in a wedding envelope? Is it Yoni's wife's fault who moved it? Is it the fault of the second Avi who threw it in the garbage?

Who do you think is responsible for the lost cash?

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of light which reached those precious stones and behold the room was filled with the king's light. All that illumination came from those stones which reflected the light that they received through the crack in the room and through the crack in the box.

HaShem created the material world which is limited to the three dimensional limitations. It is an opaque world where the light from HaShem does not shine. However, HaShem wanted to fill the material world with His incredible limitless light. How could He fill the finite world with His infinite light? To that end He chose the Jewish people to whom He gave His Torah through which they would be able to receive His ray of light. Just like those diamonds, every Jew's neshama is able to receive HaShem's ray of light and reflect it outward.

However, the light reflected from a single Jewish neshama is not sufficient to illuminate the entire world. He therefore instructed His people to build a Mishkan in which every member

of His people would participate. When every member focuses their attention on that Mishkan the light that is generated from that conglomerate illuminates the entire material world.

Although the general principle is that the particle is drawn to its source, nevertheless, in order to illuminate this opaque world HaShem directs His light to us. HaShem wants very much to fill His material world with His illumination. That is why He shines His ray to the members of his people.

Malbim takes this notion one step further. Not only when we had the Mishkan and the Bais Hamikdosh were we able to illuminate the world, but even in its destruction we continue to illuminate. Even though we do have the Temple to connect all the precious stones to one location, nevertheless, every member of our people turn their attention three times daily to that single location. With single focus our reflected light generate illumination.

May we merit the day when all members of His beloved people will join together on the plaza of the Bais Hamikdosh, soon in our days.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

LAND WALKING FISH; THE ARMORED CATFISH

Have you ever heard of a fish that can hold its breath for 30 hours, leave the water, and walk over sandy surfaces to enter a new body of water? Please meet the fascinating Armored Catfish.

Armored Catfish are native to the Amazon River Basin and are widely distributed in Costa Rica, Panama, and South America. These fish play a crucial role in freshwater ecosystems. They contribute to nutrient cycling and ecosystem stability by feeding on algae, small invertebrates, and organic waste, thus maintaining water quality and supporting the food web. In fact, armored catfish help clean aquariums by feeding on algae and organic waste. Their body lengths vary greatly among species, from a few centimeters to more than four feet long.

Armored catfish are renowned for their unique adaptations. Some call them living tanks. Their bodies are covered in bony plates called scutes, which act like armor, protecting them from predators and harsh environments. These plates come in various shapes, sizes, and even colors, depending on the species. The armor also has another role. The strong pectoral fins of armored catfish allow them to extend their size, making them harder for predators to swallow. They extend their fins when threatened to avoid being swallowed by predators like fish, birds, river otters, and crocodiles.

The suckermouth of the armored catfish is a multifunctional instrument, allowing them to feed by scraping algae from submerged tree trunks, rocks, and river bottoms. They can also use this sucker mouth to access oxygen to breathe. In fast-flowing streams, the suckermouth allows them to cling to surfaces. Interestingly, in addition to having a unique mouth, their taste buds are external and cover almost their entire fins. Different species eat different things, so armored catfish are either vegetarian, omnivores, carnivores, or wood-eaters.

They are underwater architects. Many armored catfish are skilled at building nests using rocks, leaves, and other debris. These nests provide a safe haven for their eggs and fry until they hatch and grow strong enough to fend for themselves.

But the most fascinating aspect of their behavior is the unique ability of armored catfish to "walk" across sand during drought conditions.

These fish can gulp air and hold it in their stomachs, enabling them to breathe for up to 30 hours out of water. This ability is crucial for survival during their excursions out of water, as it allows them to maintain oxygenation while navigating through terrestrial environments to reach new aquatic habitats. The vascularized stomach of armored catfish acts as a lung, allowing gas exchange in low-oxygen conditions or when out of water for extended periods, up to 30 hours.

In addition, armored catfish are equipped with strong pectoral fins that they use to propel themselves forward in a walking motion. These fins, along with their unique body structure, enable the fish to move across damp surfaces, such as muddy or sandy riverbanks when searching for water. The bony plates that cover their bodies not only serve as armor against predators but also aid in this terrestrial locomotion by providing protection against rough surfaces.

The motivation for armored catfish to embark on these terrestrial journeys typically arises during drought conditions when water levels in their habitats drop significantly. In such scenarios, armored catfish use their "walking" ability to shuffle across land to find other water bodies, ensuring their survival and the continuation of their species.

The truth is that this special walking ability is actually a double-edged sword. While the "walking" behavior of armored catfish showcases their resilience and adaptability, it also highlights their potential as invasive species. In non-native regions, such as Florida and Texas, their ability to move across land allows them to colonize new habitats, often at the expense of native species. The territorial nature of armored catfish, combined with their consumption of algae and fish eggs, can significantly impact local ecosystems, and they are now considered invasive species in Florida, Texas, and Mexico. This emphasizes the importance of monitoring and managing armored catfish populations, especially in non-native regions, to preserve ecological balance.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

YOU SENT ME SOMETHING SPECIAL, I CALLED TO THANK YOU

A new talmid in Adelpia asked a question in shiur to Rabbi Dovid Trenk. "That's some question, I can't believe a boy your age is asking so well, come with me." Rabbi Trenk pulled the timid young boy by the arm. "Come to my office, we have to call Rabbi Frankel." Together, they called Rabbi Yehuda Frankel, menahel at the Mirrer Yeshiva at the time, and the one who had sent the bachur to learn in Adelpia. "Reb Yudi, you sent me something special. I called to thank you," Rabbi Trenk told his dear friend.



One of the boys left yeshivah every day after Minchah, biking home, where he would spend the rest of the day. His mother was upset, and she mentioned it to Rabbi Trenk. "Until he finally leaves, it's 10 o'clock in the morning, and by 2:30, he's back. What kind of day is that?" she asked. Reb Dovid spoke gently. "You're a lucky woman," he said. "Ashrecha, you must be a great mother... Where is your son going, to the movies? To the mall? He's going home, to you. He wants to be here, in your home. That's a great mother."

(From Just Love Them, The Life and Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Trenk, By Rabbi Yisroel Besser, Published By Artscroll Mesorah)



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about arranging for a horse and buggy to be used instead of driving, Rabbi Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok, Vayikra 253) asked this question to Rabbi Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinman. Rav Shteinman answered that this cannot be compared to the case of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter because there, it was not done by the Rabbi of the community, and the violation of Shabbos wasn't public, and it wouldn't lead to others joining in. But in our case, the Rabbi of the community arranged it, and it's in public, and other people may join in. So even though riding a carriage would be a smaller prohibition, it would not be permitted. Rabbi Zilberstein further cites the Akeidas Yitzchak who says that when an individual commits a severe prohibition, that is his personal reckoning with Hashem. But if a prohibition is done with the condoning of the whole community, and the permission of the Rabbis of the community, then it becomes a communal violation that is much worse.

The Schwartz Family dedicates this week's TableTalk to the memory of my mother's cousin **Yudith**.

Her dedication to helping others knew no bounds.

Yefim, Yudith (Yelena), and Leah (Jane)



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