

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE RECALL

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Akiva was in the market to buy a new used car. He saw an advertisement for a 2010 Volkswagen sedan, with the asking price of 20,000 shekels. Akiva was surprised because his research indicated that the going rate for a used car of that make, mileage, and age was really 40,000 shekels.

He called up the seller, whose name was Yakov, and expressed interest in buying the car. He then asked why the car was so cheap when the going rate was 40,000 shekels. Yakov answered, "I have to be completely transparent with you. There's a problem with the diesel injection system, which is very costly to repair. It will cost about 15,000 shekels to repair. Instead of selling it at the full



THE COPPER FOREHEAD

Gleaned from a talk from Rav Aaron Lopiansky

HaShem instructs Moshe "Avenge the dignity of the Jewish people from Midyan and then you shall pass on." In the ensuing battle with Midyan, the Torah highlights Bilam's death even though he was not a Midyanite. However, since he was the instigator of Midyan's attack, he became a major focus in this battle.

The manner in which HaShem associates Moshe's passing with the battle against Midyan appears that Moshe was not ready to pass on until Midyan and Bilam had been eliminated. The message is that Moshe's legacy to his people would not be complete until this is accomplished. Moshe took us out of Egypt, crossed us the Red Sea, gave us the Torah and all the lessons we learnt in the desert. What more will be learnt from this battle?

Our Sages tell us the fascinating story in which Bilam and the Midyanite kings were killed. Bilam, using magic, lifted himself and the kings above the ground, defying the laws of gravity. Pinchos, lifted himself as well using the Name of HaShem and met them on their level. Pinchos then showed them the Tzitz, which was the gold band that the high priest wore on his forehead and Bilam's magic was rendered useless and they fell from the sky. On this gold forehead band was etched 'Kodesh la'HaShem' which means 'dedicated to HaShem.

When the Sages tell us this story they are teaching us that the message of the tzitz is the undoing of the power of Bilam and his kings. What is their power and how does the tzitz undo that?

The prophet Yishayahu (Isaiah 54:4) identifies two forms of rebellion. The first is called 'stiff necked' in which the person refuses to listen to HaShem. Rather, he turns his back on Him. The second form called 'copper forehead', is a more intense form of rebellion where the

price, I'm selling it for 20,000 shekels."

Akiva thought about it and decided he was going to buy it anyway to see if maybe he could repair it at a good price. He bought the car, and it worked for the time being.

A while after Akiva bought the car, he received a notice in the mail from the Volkswagen company, notifying him that there was a recall on the diesel injection system—a problem worldwide for all Volkswagens. He could bring it to any Volkswagen dealer, and they would fix it for free.

Sure enough, Akiva brought his car to the dealer, and they fixed the car up good as new. Akiva now had a 40,000 shekel car for the small price of 20,000 shekels. But now, Akiva wondered, was it okay for him to keep the car? The only reason the owner sold it was that he thought there was a major problem that would be very expensive to fix, but really, it could be fixed for free.

Akiva wanted to know if he had to mention this to the seller. Did he have to offer to return it, or could he just be quiet and go on his merry way without mentioning anything to the seller? What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Devarim Page 240

MITZVA MEME



person faces HaShem and understands what HaShem is expecting of him and refuses to fulfill the expectation.

The former refers to the neck because that is the part of the body which illustrates turning his back on the speaker. The reason the forehead is associated with the greater sense of rebellion is as follows.

Our Sages teach that Moshe and Bilam were equal in their level of understanding of HaShem and His ways. There was nobody in history that paralleled them. In fact, Bilam's exceptional expertise in magic came from his understanding of HaShem's metaphysical rules. Bilam knew the single moment of the day when HaShem's anger was aroused. We could say that Bilam looked at HaShem in the face. He was completely aware and paid much attention to what HaShem said and the laws that He set down. The difference between Moshe and Bilam was how to implement their respective knowledge of HaShem and His ways. Moshe penetrated HaShem ways to the point of absolute bitul. Moshe absorbed the Will of HaShem completely. His own will was non-existent. Moshe's will was to fulfill HaShem's Will. Bilam, on the other hand, used his extensive understanding of Ha-

Shem to serve his own will. Bilam was not interested in executing the Will of HaShem.

The executive function of the brain is in the frontal lobe of the brain which is located behind the forehead. It is responsible for carrying out the person's decisions. Although Moshe and Bilam had a common understanding of HaShem and His ways, nevertheless, how they carried out that understanding was where they parted. Perhaps the message of the tzitz which was worn on the frontal lobe of the Kehin Gadol was specifically that the executive function is 'dedicated to HaShem'. When that message flashed in front of Bilam his power melted. His power was built on using the knowledge of HaShem for his own devices.

So often we face dilemmas when halacha permits certain action but we know that taking such action is not really in sync with the Will of HaShem. The legacy of this battle against Bilam and the Midyanites will guide us to focus on the His Will and not on the strict halacha.

The final lesson Moshe needed to teach his people was that the purpose of knowing HaShem and His Torah is to be completely absorbed by His Will and only then could Moshe pass on.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE SWIFT, A BIRD THAT LIVES IN THE AIR

Can you picture a bird that spends nearly its entire life on the wing, eating, sleeping, and bathing in the sky, never touching the ground for months on end? Meet the Common Swift (*Apus apus*), an avian marvel whose aerial prowess and remarkable adaptations make it one of the most extraordinary creatures in the bird world. Let's dive into the fascinating world of this incredible bird, from its unique lifestyle to its amazing migration patterns.

The Common Swift is a medium-sized bird, superficially resembling the barn swallow or house martin. This bird's scientific name, *Apus apus*, aptly reflects its nature: "apus" is derived from Greek meaning "without foot," highlighting the fact that they don't spend much time on their feet.

One of the most astonishing facts about the Common Swift is its ability to spend up to ten months in continuous flight. Imagine staying in the air for ten months straight! These birds feed, drink, mate, and even sleep while flying, only landing to nest. With a body length of 6.2 - 6.7 inches and a wingspan of 13.5 - 15 inches, they are built for the air. Their powerful wing muscles and streamlined bodies make sustained flight energy-efficient. They can reach horizontal speeds of up to 70 mph making them among the fastest birds in level flight. Over their lifetimes, swifts can cover millions of miles. They drink by gliding over water surfaces, taking sips as they go, and bathe by flying through falling rain. These birds are even capable of unihemispheric slow-wave sleep (USWS), allowing one half of their brain to rest while the other remains active, enabling them to sleep while flying.

Swifts possess several unique features that enable them to stay airborne for extended periods. Their tiny feet and almost non-existent legs are perfect for clinging to vertical surfaces but make it difficult for them to land and take off from flat surfaces. This is why they rarely settle on the ground voluntarily. Their efficient respiratory systems support high oxygen demands during constant flight, and their high metabolic rate allows them to convert food into energy efficiently.

The only time swifts land is during the breeding season. They return to their nesting sites in Europe from Africa every spring, where they engage in spectacular "screaming parties" — groups of swifts flying together while calling loudly, often near their nesting sites. Common Swifts are social birds, often seen in large feeding parties. They communicate using loud screams in two different tone pitches, forming "screaming parties" during summer evenings. These parties can grow larger and occur at higher altitudes late in the breeding season, showcasing their communal nature. Their "screaming parties" are more than just pre-

nesting gatherings; they are complex social interactions that help strengthen communal bonds and coordinate activities like feeding and mating. These vocalizations play a critical role in maintaining the flock's structure and function.

Swifts are monogamous and may remain with their partners for life. They often return to the same nesting site year after year, reinforcing the bond with their mate and their shared home. Nests are constructed from materials collected in flight, such as feathers, strings, and leaves, all bonded together with saliva. These nests are usually tucked away under roof eaves or inside old buildings, safe from predators and the elements. Remarkably, young nesting swifts can survive without food by entering a torpid state, a survival mechanism during food shortages.

They have the potential to live up to 21 years, though the average lifespan is about 5.5 years. They undertake an extensive migration each year, traveling approximately 14,000 miles between their breeding grounds and wintering areas. Despite their robust activity and wide-ranging flights, swifts are surprisingly light, weighing only about 40 grams.

Feeding on the Fly: Swifts feed exclusively on insects caught in mid-air. They have a large, gaping mouth which helps them scoop up flying insects as they dart through the air. Their feeding territory is vast, often covering large areas where they follow swarms of insects carried by the wind. The diet of the Common Swift, consisting solely of airborne insects, positions them as vital controllers of insect populations. This ecological role is beneficial for human agriculture and the natural environment, reducing pest populations naturally and helping to balance ecosystems.

Migration is a critical part of the swift's life cycle. They breed across Europe and parts of Asia and spend their winters in sub-Saharan Africa. The journey is long and perilous, with swifts covering up to 14,000 miles annually. They navigate this journey not alone but often in large flocks, which helps them protect against predators and improve their aerodynamic efficiency.

Swifts are equipped with highly developed navigational skills, which they utilize during their long migratory journeys. They navigate using the sun, stars, and Earth's magnetic field, a capability that allows them to travel vast distances with astonishing accuracy. This precision is crucial for returning to the same nesting sites each year, sometimes even to the same nesting spots.

The Common Swift is truly a testament to the wonders of Hashem's Creation.

THE PERFECT TIME TO TAKE OUT THE GARBAGE

Rav Mordechai Schwab would talk to his newly-married students about the importance of helping their wives, who besides being busy caring for their children, usually had jobs.

In order to teach by example, Rav Mordechai would wait with a full garbage bag by his living room window, and when he spotted the yungerleit (young married men) on their way home, he would carry out the garbage bag specifically at that time, so they could see an example of how they should help their wives.

From Rav Mordechai Schwab; A Tzadik In Monsey, By Yehoshua Schwab



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the employee who stole away the customers from his boss and wanted to sell his own kitchen to these customers, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Devarim, Page 236) answered as follows: It is forbidden for the employee to steal away the customer because he is taking away all the investment of effort and resources that the employer put into building the store. It was also forbidden for him to do that because he was paid to work for his employer, and instead, he was working for his own business. Not only is it forbidden for the employee to do this, but it would also be forbidden for the couple to buy the kitchen from him, even though it is much cheaper, because they would be facilitating his actions.

May it be the Will of HaShem that our grandchildren
Yakira, Miryam Malka, David Moshe, Yitzhak Shmuel, Mikhoel Menashe, Meir Simcha, Leah, Binyamin, and Adina
be healthy, kind and walk in the path of the Torah.

From Yosef Daniel and Ruth Ushakov



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