



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE BEAR ESCAPE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses the wild animals that were in the desert. This leads us to the following true story:

A zoo in Israel was undergoing some new construction on their animal exhibits. Due to the construction, many of the animals were moved to temporary cages. Among the temporary cages, a bear was placed in a cage next to a cage of rare birds.

One day, a security guard noticed that the lock between the bear's cage and the bird's cage had somehow become loose. The bear managed to break into the bird exhibit. The security guard watched in horror as, one



WE ARE HIS LOGO

In this week's Parsha, Moshe refers to HaShem with three titles; Gadol, Gibor and Norah; Great, Strong and Awe Inspiring. The Talmud teaches us that Yirmiyahu omitted the title of Norah because when he saw how foreigners were trampling in the Temple he said the Awe of HaShem is no longer apparent. Daniel omitted the title of Gibor because when he saw how foreigners were enslaving HaShem's people he said the Strength of HaShem is no longer apparent. Both Yirmiyahu and Daniel accepted that these titles are appropriate for HaShem, however, to refer to Him with a title that is not apparent would be disingenuous.

To appreciate this sensitivity consider the following notion. One should never refer to someone as honorable if there was nothing honorable about him. In a similar vein, one should not refer to someone as honorable if they are currently in a state of dishonor. Even though the latter is truly a man worthy of great honor, nevertheless, in his current state it would be inappropriate to use that title.

The Talmud continues that in the beginning of the Second Beis Hamikdash the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah, the Men of the Great Assembly, reinstated these three titles because they were able to recognize HaShem's Greatness and Strength through the very downgraded state of His people, as follows.

HaShem's Strength is apparent because He restrains Himself from punishing those who so deserve punishment. Just as the Mishna teaches that true strength lies in the ability to restrain oneself so it is with HaShem when He restrains Himself and allows the wicked to flourish is a fantastic demonstration of strength. The truly Omnipotent One can hold Himself back and wait decades before he takes revenge.

HaShem's Awesomeness is also apparent because without His miraculous intervention there is no way that His people could survive the endless attempts of destruction per-

by one, the bear began to eat these extremely rare birds. Instinctively, the guard panicked, fearing that the bear would devour all the birds. He quickly pulled out his gun and, with one shot, killed the bear.

Initially, the guard felt proud of himself, thinking that he had saved these rare birds. However, after the dust settled, the zoo administrator approached him and said, "I know you meant well, but the truth is, you've caused us a significant loss. This bear was extremely rare—there are only a few of its kind left in the entire world. While the birds are rare, they don't cost nearly as much as the bear. All of them together cost only a fraction of what the bear was worth."

The security guard later approached Rabbi Zilberstein: Was he obligated to pay for the damage caused by killing the bear? On one hand, he believed he was saving the zoo a lot of money by protecting the birds, but he didn't realize that the birds were worth far less than the bear. On the other hand, practically speaking, he did cause the zoo a great financial loss.

What do you think? Is the security guard obligated to pay for the loss of the bear?

See Upiro Matok Devarim page 272.



petrated by the nations of the world.

Therefore, in light of these two insights, the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah reinstated use of those titles. When we contemplate their decision to reinstate these titles in reference to HaShem, we will realize that HaShem has tied His Name, or perhaps Himself, to us in a most direct way, as follows.

We know HaShem is Awe Inspiring, after all, He created the world from nothing. The greatest stars and largest galaxies exist by the simple Will of HaShem. The most intricate systems of the smallest microscopic particles were created by the same simple Will of HaShem. Nevertheless, to the eyes of Man we take these miracles for granted as they fall under the purview of Nature. HaShem's Awesomeness therefore goes unrealized.

When the Beis Hamikdosh stood His Awesomeness was evident through the Awesome miracles that occurred there. Now, with no Beis Hamikdosh, HaShem has chosen to demonstrate His Awesomeness through us. As we continue to survive and to thrive

against all odds is evidence of HaShem's Awe. His title rides on our continuity.

Can there be a greater source of security than having HaShem investing His Title in our continuity? This should certainly be a source of consolation to us as the memory of Tisha b'Av is fresh in our minds. However, it also places a tremendous responsibility upon us to live up to HaShem's expectations of us.

How does it look if we are a people who, GD forbid, speak loshon hara or reject His Torah. Can we expect Him to tolerate this behavior if His Title is tied to our continuity?

How we live our lives by the choices we make and conduct ourselves bring Honor to Him. We are carrying His Name. We are His Logo.

As we continue our journey through the seven weeks of consolation may HaShem inspire us to appreciate the honor He placed upon us and elevate us to return that Honor to its rightful place.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE HAUNTING BEAUTY OF GHOST APPLES

Winter has a way of transforming the familiar into something magical, and sometimes, nature surprises us with phenomena that seem almost otherworldly. One such event, captivating in its beauty and mystery, is the "ghost apple" phenomenon—a rare occurrence that leaves many in awe of the wonders that cold weather can create. Discovered in the icy orchards of Michigan, these ethereal remnants of apples hanging from bare branches resemble something straight out of a winter fairy tale. But what exactly are ghost apples, and how do they form?

The story of ghost apples begins in the winter of 2019, in an orchard near Sparta, Michigan. Andrew Sietsema, a horticulturist, was out pruning apple trees during a particularly harsh cold snap brought on by the polar vortex. As he worked through the rows of trees, Sietsema noticed something unusual—icy clear shapes of apples still hanging from the branches. These casings were hollow, the actual apple inside having slipped out, leaving behind a delicate shell of ice.

Sietsema, fascinated by what he saw, took photos of these ghostly shells and shared them online. The images quickly went viral, captivating viewers around the world. People soon dubbed these icy remnants "ghost apples," a fitting name for their translucent, eerie appearance.

How do Ghost Apples form? The creation of ghost apples is a dance between freezing temperatures, the structure of apples, and the subtle warmth that can turn a solid fruit into a soupy mess. It all starts with freezing rain, which coats the apples in a thick layer of ice. This initial ice formation is crucial, as it creates a shell around the apple, preserving its shape even as the fruit inside begins to decay.

Apples, particularly varieties like Jonagolds, are known for their high water content and acidic nature, which prevent them from freezing solid as easily as other fruits. However, when temperatures plummet to extreme lows, as they did during that polar vortex, the internal structure of the apple begins to break down. The flesh of the apple turns to mush, a process exacerbated by the slight warmth of the sun or a brief rise in temperature. Eventually, this mush slips out through any small openings in the ice casing or seeps out as the apple's skin deteriorates, leaving behind a hollow, fragile ice shell—the ghost apple.

The hollow ice shells are often incredibly smooth and clear, almost as if they were polished. This is due to the way freezing rain uniformly coats the surface of the apple, forming a perfect layer of ice that captures every detail of the apple's exterior before it turns to mush. Ghost apples can be thought of as natural ice sculptures.

The ice casings are so delicate and perfectly shaped that they mimic the precision of human-made ice sculptures, yet they are entirely crafted by the forces of nature.

For scientists, ghost apples represent a fascinating study in thermodynamics and plant biology. The specific temperature ranges and the physical properties of the apples create a perfect natural experiment, where one can observe how plant tissues react under extreme conditions. Apples, with their high water content and delicate structure, provide an ideal subject for this natural experiment. The process by which the apple flesh turns to mush while the ice shell remains intact is a striking demonstration of the delicate balance between temperature, structure, and time in nature.

While ghost apples are the most famous, this phenomenon can theoretically happen with other fruits as well, especially those with a similar water content and skin structure, such as pears or plums. However, the perfect conditions for such occurrences are very specific, making ghost apples the most commonly observed example. The phenomenon is rare not because the conditions are unique, but because they are seldom documented. Sietsema himself had never seen ghost apples before, despite years of working in orchards. The perfect storm of freezing rain, followed by a slight thaw, and the right type of fruit must all come together to create these icy wonders.

Ghost apples are not just beautiful; they can also act like natural lenses. The curvature of the ice shell can refract light, sometimes creating a magnifying effect when you look through them. This optical property adds another layer of intrigue to these icy wonders, making them even more fascinating to observe up close. The way the light bends through the ice can create shimmering effects, almost like a winter kaleidoscope, revealing yet another example of beauty in the most unexpected places.

The ghost apple phenomenon has inspired photographers and artists, who are drawn to its fragile beauty. The photos of ghost apples often feature them suspended in mid-air, appearing almost like ornaments. These images have captured the imagination of people around the world, leading to various artistic interpretations in different media. Whether in paintings, photographs, or even sculptures, ghost apples have become a symbol of nature's ability to create art that is both fleeting and unforgettable.

In the end, ghost apples are more than just a curiosity; they are a testament to the elegance and the surprising beauty of Hashem's creation.

THE POWER OF SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Rav Yechiel Benedikt, born in 1907 in Europe, emigrated to Eretz Yisroel in 1938. Among his choshuva children was his son-in-law, Reb Meir Soloveichik, son of the Brisker Rav. He settled in the area of Tel Aviv and developed a close relationship with the Chazon Ish whom he considered his Rebbi.

It was not easy raising a family in the new fledgling country of Israel so he went to his Rebbi, the Chazon Ish for pointers on what are the most important things he should focus on to insure his children grow in the proper spirit of Torah.

The Chazon Ish recommended that he ask this question to the Belzer Rebbe, Reb Arele Belzer who arrived in Eretz Yisroel after the war. The Chazon Ish then asked Rav Yechiel to please get back to him on what the Belzer Rebbe would advise.

The Belzer Rebbe told Reb Yechiel that the Shabbos table is a critical component in raising children. "If your Shabbos table is filled with joyous zemiros and pleasant Torah talk in a relaxed atmosphere you will have much hatzlacha in raising your children."

As told by his grandson Reb Yosef Tzvi Benedikt.

This Sunday, 21 Av, will be the yahrtzeit of Reb Arele Belzer.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about taking the parts from the car that was about to be crushed for recycling metal, Rav Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Devarim page 266) concludes with a "tzarich iyun, undecided" but he says that it seems that the owner of the car would not be able to extract the money for the parts because the parts had no market value right before they were going to be crushed.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in memory of our Parents

טעבל דוד בן יוסף אריה ע"ה וחייה אלטא בת דוב ע"ה
עזריאל בן אליהו ע"ה וגיטל בת דוד ע"ה

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