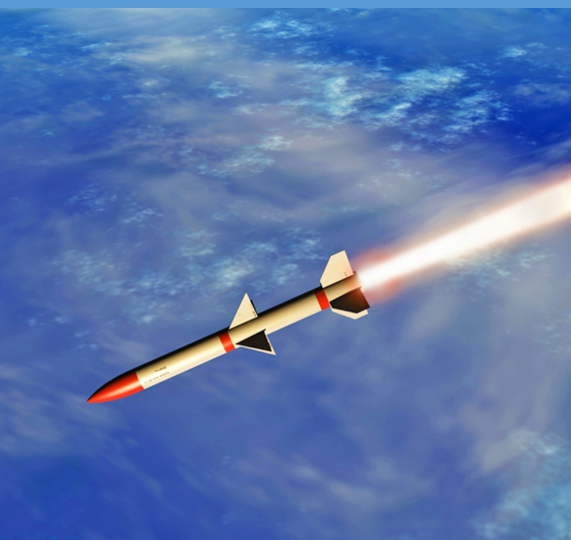




## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



## THE MIRACLE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week we celebrated Chanukah, which helps us relive the miracle that happened in Eretz Yisrael. Here is another story about a miracle that happened in Eretz Yisrael.

It was during the period when Arab terrorists were shooting rockets into Jewish civilian populations. Chaim was in a shul one day. The davening was completed, and all the attendees filed out. Suddenly, after everyone was out of the building, a terrorist rocket slammed into the



## SHEMA; IT'S ALL HIS WILL

Our Sages tell us that when Yaakov met his beloved son Yosef, the one on whom rested the destiny of his people, the one whom he thought had perished years earlier, he recited the Shema. Yosef, on the other hand, did not recite the Shema. If their first encounter generates inspiration for Shema, why does Yosef not recite the Shema?

The world is filled with the splendor of HaShem. Whether we look to the heavens with the naked eye or with the Webb Telescope, whether we study the human body or peer into the nucleus of a cell. Not only will we see the genius and wisdom of HaShem, we will also discover His absolute Unity. We will find that every member of His creation has its unique role in the totality of everything. There is nothing that is extra and every one is needed.

There is however one area which appears to proclaim HaShem's limitation c'v. That is the existence of evil. We know that HaShem is pure Good, there is no evil. Yet, we see a world that is filled with evil. The consistent reaction to evil is always "where was GD?" We know that evil does not come from Him.

Our father Yaakov, whose role in world history is to be the one who carries HaShem's Presence, was thrown into 22 years of total darkness. His ruach haKodesh was withdrawn. From the time Yosef was taken from him, Yaakov could find no rhyme or reason as to what was happening. He was convinced that his mission to bring the world to its destiny, was doomed. He knew that without Yosef his descendants could stand up to Eisov. Evil was abounding. Where was HaShem? The evil that was happening was not an act of GD, they were malicious acts of individuals acting on their own volition. Where was HaShem, how did He allow this?

roof of the building. The entire roof caved in, and fire spread throughout the building. Miraculously, the building was completely empty, and no one was hurt at all. It was a modern-day miracle.

In a few months, the shul was about to complete its repair. One of the walls was blackened from the fire and the explosion. Chaim had an idea. He suggested to the president of the shul that they leave one wall, or at least part of the wall, charred or burned to remember the miracle. They could put up a plaque on top of the burned wall that was left there as a memorial for the attack and its miracle. The president liked the idea but suggested that perhaps it was not respectful to have a burned, charred, blackened wall as part of the shul. Perhaps they should consider doing something else to remember the miracle, like an annual seudas hoda'ah (meal to offer thanksgiving). They brought this question to Rav Zilberstein.

What do you think? Is it respectful to have a charred wall on a shul to remember the miracle?

“We must first let night pass before the day arrives.”



This was the darkness in which Yaakov Avinu lived all these years. Even when he was told that Yosef is still alive and is ruling over Egypt, he did not completely believe that it was the same Yosef, the same tzadik as his son who was taken from him years earlier.

Now, as Yaakov enters Egypt and encounters Yosef in person, seeing that it is, in fact, the very same Yosef hatzadik, he is overwhelmed with an epiphany. The darkness in which he was wrapped for the past 22 years was all by design. It was in that darkness where HaShem was preparing the destiny of His people. It was not an absence of HaShem, rather it was created by HaShem as a veil under which He would reveal His greatest revelation. That revelation was that there is nothing other than HaShem. It was a demonstration that even when man wishes to darken the world and succeeds, that itself is HaShem's expression. The apparent success of evil becomes the very path to re-

vealing HaShem's sovereignty!

Yosef's rise to power came about from the brothers' attempt to destroy him.

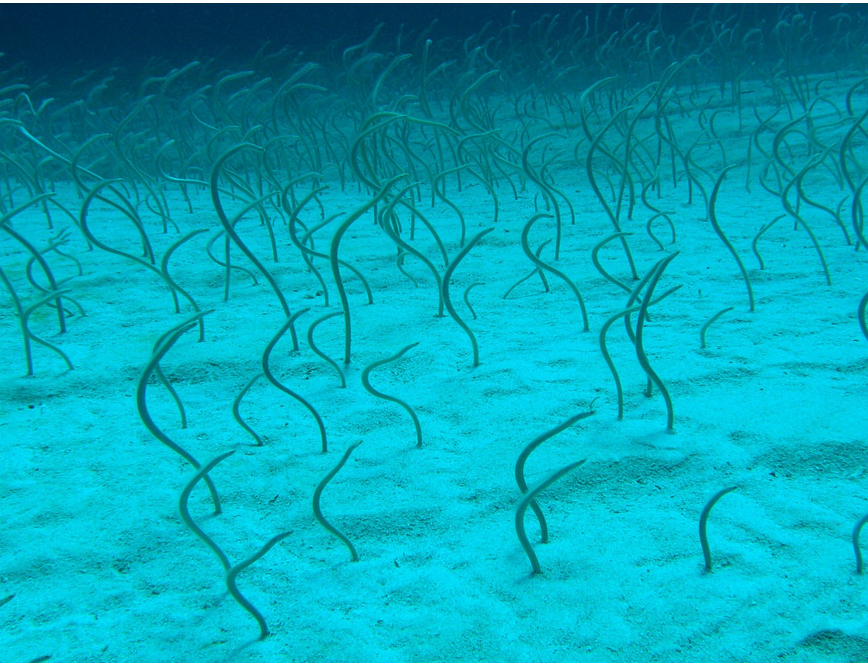
Only through darkness can the Oneness of HaShem be revealed. Only when one experiences the absence of Him and is overwhelmed with apparent darkness can they appreciate the strength of Hashem's revelation.

The mitzvah of reciting the Shema is to proclaim our acknowledgement of the Oneness of HaShem. With its recitation we express our understanding and the implications that follow, that there is no existence outside of HaShem. From the furthest Heavens to the tiny nucleus, nothing exists but Him. From the birth of a baby to the most horrid crimes against Humanity every occurrence is from HaShem.

Although Yosef suffered miserably in Egypt, he was never in the dark. All that occurred to him was for a purpose. He understood the purpose. Only for Yaakov was there darkness and therefore only Yaakov recited the Shema. For the first in his life Yaakov now recognized the absolute Oneness of HaShem.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.





## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### THE GARDEN EEL

Imagine you are swimming in the ocean. You feel a tickle on your toes. You assume it is seaweed. But are you sure?

Please meet the Garden Eel. The garden eel is a type of saltwater eel that includes 35 different species. Garden eels are small eels that live in burrows on the seafloor. Why are they called Garden Eels? Do they live in underwater gardens? It comes from their practice of poking their heads from their burrows while most of their bodies remain hidden. Since they tend to live in groups, the many eel heads "growing" from the sea floor resemble the plants in a garden. A group of them looks like a garden of seagrass. They vary greatly in color depending on the exact species involved. The largest species reach about 4 feet in length, but most are usually about 2 feet long.

Garden eel colonies are made up of hundreds to thousands of individuals. Garden eel colonies can grow as large as one acre in surface area. An acre is about 43,000 square feet. That is an area of about 209 feet by 209 feet. Imagine a garden of 43,000 square feet that is filled with 4-foot-long snakelike fish!

Garden eels dwell at a maximum depth of about 100 feet. They inhabit the ocean sand near reefs. Unlike other eels, garden eels are non-migratory.

These eels have big eyes, sharp teeth, and short noses. Their bodies are long and slim. They have one fin. The colors of the eel vary from one species to another. They can be white, black, yellow, green, brown, orange, gray, or blue. In addition, the eel can be one solid color or a combination of colors in a pattern, such as banded or spotted. Spotted garden eels, for example, are white with black spots. Splendid garden eels have a banded pattern of yellow-orange and white.

These eels spend their lives with at least their tail in the sand at all times. These eels use their tails to dig holes. How do they

prevent the sand from collapsing the burrow? They coat the burrow with mucus to avoid collapse. The whole body is never entirely out of the sand. Rather than leave their burrow, they are opportunistic feeders who wait for food to come to them in the natural current. These eels are carnivores. They mainly feed on zooplankton as it floats by them in the ocean current. They have excellent vision to spot their food. Unlike most eel species which are nocturnal, garden eels feed during the day and will retreat into their burrow at night.

Although they prefer to bury themselves in the sand, garden eels can swim freely. Once they are big enough to dig a hole and settle down, they usually never leave home. However, during the mating season, they might come out to dig a new burrow closer to their partner.

What hunts the garden eel? Triggerfish (fish with large human-like teeth), dolphins, and sharks are common predators of these eels. An eel will retreat its full body completely into these holes to evade danger. While normally that can protect the garden eel, this can't save the garden eel from another predator called the snake eel. Snake eels can burrow under the sand themselves to capture the garden eel.

These eels do not live in freshwater. Most species live in saltwater habitats, while some can also inhabit brackish water. Many of these eels are found in Indo-Pacific regions but can be found in many marine habitats.

Are garden eels dangerous to humans? No, garden eels are not dangerous. Their mouth is too small to bite you. They only eat zooplankton, remember? They have no venom, no spines, and very small teeth. In fact, these little creatures are very shy and disappear underground when divers approach. It is, therefore, very difficult to even take a picture of them.



## EVERYONE WAS DANCING, BUT FOR DIFFERENT REASONS

While Shabbos is primarily a spiritual day, it is customary to serve delicious meals and use one's finest dinnerware. Someone asked the Baal Shem Tov whether it was not inconsistent to indulge in gustatory delights on a day that is "meant to be spiritual." "Not at all," the Baal Shem Tov said. He explained with a story.

There was once a king who had to exile his son for behavior unbecoming a prince. The remorseful son lived in anguish, longing to return to the royal palace. After a period of time, the prince received a message from his father that he was now welcome to return home. The prince's joy was boundless, and he wished to celebrate in song and dance. He knew, however, that people would think him insane if he abruptly began to sing and dance. He, therefore, threw a party with abundant food and drink. When the guests were in high spirits, they began to sing and dance, and this gave the prince the opportunity to sing and dance without appearing ostentatious.

Everyone was dancing, but for different reasons. The guests were happy with the food and drink. But the prince, who was sober, was rejoicing because he was to return to the palace with his Father.

Explained, the Baal Shem Tov, "So it is with the Shabbos. The neshama wishes to exalt in spiritual delights, but it is trapped within a physical body, which may inhibit the neshamah's aspirations. We, therefore, give the body physical pleasures, so that it may be happy with its gratification, leaving the neshamah uninhibited in its quest to reach spiritual heights. The food and relaxation of Shabbos must be properly understood as a way to facilitate the spiritual dimensions of Shabbos.



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the crashed car, Rav Zilberstein writes that while the driver did the wrong thing by leaving the car with the key in the ignition, that does not absolve the teenage boy from paying for the damage and therefore, the boy would be responsible to pay for the damage.

This week's Table Talk is dedicated in memory of  
**Yitzchak Yisrael ben Rafael Noach Yosef**  
and  
**Yisrael ben Yom Tov Lipman**  
whose yahrzeits are this Shabbos, 7 Teves.  
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