



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



UNDERCOVER INVESTIGATOR

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

There was a very successful old age home in Israel. However, the police department was running an investigation to determine whether it was violating certain health codes in its practices. They had strong suspicions but needed evidence to support their suspicion.

So, they deployed an undercover agent to find proof. Avi, the undercover agent, applied for a job in the old age home as the IT director. Avi was very proficient in this field, and the director of the nursing home interviewed him and gladly hired him. He was put in charge of all the IT and did an exemplary job. His boss and all the employees were really pleased with his performance, and he got along well with everybody.

In the meantime, while Avi was at work, he



EXPERIENCE IS THE ONLY REAL TEACHER

This week's Parsha, Shmini, presents a very tragic event that occurred on the day the Mishkan was inaugurated. This was the day that HaShem's Presence revealed itself within the camp of our people. The inspiration of HaShem's love and endearment to His people expressed by the Shechina was overwhelming. Naturally, the great people of that period whose souls were more sensitive to that intense spiritual influence were all the more overwhelmed. Two of Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, individuals whose spiritual level was parallel to those of Moshe and Aharon became intoxicated with the inspiration of the Shechina. After their father brought his required offerings they entered the Mishkan to present their own offerings. These were offerings that were not asked for. In fact, because they were not expected by HaShem, they were not allowed to be brought. In spite of their best intentions, their offerings were not wanted by HaShem in the Mishkan. Since Nadav and Avihu acted on their own accord and presented offerings that were not warranted by HaShem, a Heavenly fire came down and they perished.

Thus the incredible joy of welcoming the Mishkan was marred by the death of these two great people.

At Mount Sinai Nadav and Avihu also crossed a line beyond which they should not have gone. They stared at a revelation of HaShem that was not intended for them. Our Sages teach us that they were deserving to die then, however, HaShem did not want to dampen the joy of receiving the Torah with the death of these two great leaders. He therefore waited to carry out their destiny to occur at

was able to surreptitiously hide cameras in strategic places to be able to find absolute proof that the company was breaking the codes. Avi was getting a double salary. He was paid generously by the old age home for his IT work, but he was also getting paid by the Police Department for his job as an investigator.

Finally, after three months, Avi had all the proof that he needed and he presented his report to his superiors in the police department. Using this proof, they saw that indeed the home was violating many laws, and they shut down the old age home. The director of the old age home was facing numerous indictments for breaking the law.

Avi now had the following question: He was responsible for shutting down the old age home. He wanted to know if he was allowed to keep the salary from the old age home.

On one hand, he did his job very well and they paid him for his job. But on the other hand, the whole purpose of his job was to shut down the old age home. Had his superiors known that, they never would have hired him had they known his real intentions. Therefore, perhaps he was hired under false pretenses, and he was not allowed to keep the money.

This is a question that Avi brought Rav Zilberstein: Was he allowed to keep the money that he earned from the old age home that was used as the cover for his undercover investigation work?

See Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 331



the inauguration of the Mishkah. The question is why was HaShem not concerned about dampening the joy of the inauguration?

Our Sages explain that the death of Nadav and Avihu at the inauguration was specifically intended to teach our people a lesson; before anything else HaShem demands Obedience.

At the inauguration, as the Presence of HaShem became our Neighbor, it was critical for us to learn that we must approach His Presence with fear and with awe. While we can be overcome with love of HaShem for everything He does for us and for Him choosing us to be His people, nevertheless, love has boundaries. Our love can be infinitely deep but its expression must be in line with His boundaries. This is why specifically on this great day Nadav and Avihu were killed, so that the lesson be taught.

But why was it necessary to dampen this joy with the death of Nadav and Avihu, would not a special commandment from HaShem sufficed?

I had the opportunity to spend Shabbos with my grandfather, Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky zt'l. As we were sitting at the table he let out a sigh, "How unfortunate it is that when we are young and are filled with energy we are missing the wisdom to know how to direct our energy and when we are older and wiser we no longer have that energy to carry out that wisdom." Upon hearing this, I suggested that perhaps Zaide could share his wisdom with me as I am young. I can then use that wisdom to direct my energy. The two of us can join together! He replied "No, it does not work that way, you need to learn that wisdom yourself."

The lesson of obedience to the Will of HaShem is so great, we needed learn that wisdom first hand.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE SAWFISH

In the vast and mysterious world of marine life, the sawfish stands out as one of the most intriguing species. These cartilaginous fish, resembling a cross between a shark and a ray but distinguished by their unique rostrum—a long, flattened snout lined with sharp teeth reminiscent of a saw—have fascinated humans for millennia. Despite their formidable appearance, sawfish are now among the world's most endangered marine animals, facing threats from habitat destruction, entanglement in fishing nets, and the relentless hunt for their rostrums and fins. Let us uncover amazing facts about these mysterious creatures, enlightening and inspiring us about Hashem's wondrous creation.

The sawfish is distinguished by its unique anatomical feature: an elongated rostrum (snout), up to 7 feet long adorned with razor-sharp, tooth-like structures known as denticles. This distinctive rostrum serves multiple critical purposes.

As a hunting tool, the rostrum boasts 14-37 denticles on each side, allowing the sawfish to incapacitate its prey with astounding accuracy. It is also equipped with thousands of tiny electroreceptors, enabling the detection of electrical currents from prey at distances up to 40 centimeters. These electroreceptors are one of the most sensitive biological detection systems in the animal kingdom and are even capable of finding prey hidden in the ocean floor. While hunting, sawfish utilize their rostrum to strike prey sideways, or pinning fish against the seafloor or slicing them apart with a vigorous back-and-forth sawing motion. Sawfish also use their rostrum in a unique hunting method known as stun feeding, where they whip their saw to stun prey before consumption.

Beyond hunting, the rostrum also serves as a formidable defense mechanism. Its sharp denticles make it an efficient weapon even against larger predators like sharks. Although they are generally docile towards humans, the rostrum's sharpness means that accidental encounters can result in significant injuries.

The rostrum exhibits unique characteristics; the pattern of denticles is distinct to each individual, acting as a biological "fingerprint." It's noteworthy that if these denticles are lost or damaged, they do not regenerate, contrasting with the sawfish's ability to regrow its regular teeth. Furthermore, the denticle count can vary between the left and right sides of the rostrum, adding to its uniqueness.

The sawfish's rostrum has inspired myths and legends in various cultures. Some historical narratives claimed that sawfish could cut through the hulls of wooden ships with their rostrums. In fact, European sailors once feared sawfish, believing them capable of sinking ships. Interestingly, the presence of sawfish rostrums in ancient shipwrecks lends some credence to historical encounters between these creatures and sailors, adding a layer of mystery to their legend.

Because the rostrums are so durable and sharp, indigenous peoples have hunted sawfish and used the sawfish rostrums as deadly weapons.

Sawfish are among the largest fish species, with some potentially exceeding 25 feet long and weighing up to 2200 lbs.

Despite their size, sawfish can camouflage themselves on the ocean floor, using their rostrums for defense against predators and to navigate the murky waters of their habitats. Depending on their environment, sawfish can exhibit color variations from dark brown to greenish-grey, an adaptation that aids in their camouflage.

Sawfish are unique marine creatures because they can live in both saltwater and freshwater, demonstrating their amazing adaptability. This ability, known as osmoregulation, allows them to adjust to different levels of water salinity, showcasing their ecological importance and complex survival mechanisms. They typically reside in shallow waters below 10 meters in depth and prefer shallow, inshore waters but can adapt to various salinity levels, and swim up rivers moving freely between marine and freshwater habitats.

They have a lifespan of up to 50 years, depending on the species. Large sharks are their main predators. Sawfish are subject to parasitic infections, which can affect their health and survival. Recently, sawfish have been in the news because they have been seen near Florida mysteriously spinning in circles and then dying. Scientists do not know what is causing this but suggest it may be a neurological response to a toxin or a parasite.

Sawfish can reach a top speed of 30-35 mph. Their powerful tail fin is capable of rapid bursts of speed, an essential feature for escaping predators and capturing prey.

As apex predators, sawfish play a critical role in maintaining the balance of marine life, helping to regulate the populations of other species and ensure the health of ecosystems. Their diet consists of fish, crustaceans, and mollusks. The diet of sawfish can also include squid and octopus, depending on their habitat.

Sawfish have a limited social structure, often leading solitary lives except during mating or in nursery grounds. Sawfish are known for their slow growth rate, which contributes to their vulnerability, as it takes them several years to reach full maturity to begin reproduction.

To address this vulnerability, Hashem gave sawfish two fascinating and unique abilities. Sawfish have a unique way of reproducing called ovoviviparity. This means that after a gestation of up to a year, eggs hatch inside the mother leading to live birth. This unique reproductive strategy helps protect developing eggs from predation.

Sawfish have another unique ability: female sawfish can "clone" themselves through a process of parthenogenesis. This means that when population numbers get too low, a female sawfish can reproduce without males, contributing to population maintenance. Some scientists say that as much as 3% of the population is produced by this cloning process.

Thank you, Hashem, for your wondrous world!

PLEASE GIVE ME A BERACHAH THAT I SHOULD HAVE A GESHMAK IN LEARNING!

It was Yom Kippur, just after Kol Nidrei, but it wasn't just any Yom Kippur. It was the second to last Yom Kippur of the Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Elya Meir Sorotzkin's life. He was already very ill. The talmidim did not know just how advanced his illness was, but they knew that his condition was life-threatening. It was during the break between Kol Nidrei and Maariv when Dov decided to approach the Rosh Yeshivah to ask for a bracha. The Rosh Yeshivah looked like an angel to him, wearing his kittel, the seriousness of the day etched on his face. The Rosh Yeshivah was happy to accommodate and gave Dov a heartfelt bracha.

He then took Dov completely by surprise by uncharacteristically asking, "Now please give me a bracha." Initially, Dov was caught off guard. He, a mere talmid, should give his Rosh Yeshivah a bracha? When he found his voice, he gave a most heartfelt bracha for a refuah sheleimah, nachas from his children, from his talmidim, from the yeshivah, and that the talmidim should continue to shteig. The Rosh Yeshivah answered amen and then embellished his request. "Firstly," he said, "please give me a bracha that I should have nachas from you... and secondly, please give me a bracha that I should have a geshmak (enjoyment) in learning!" "That completely took me by surprise!" Dov recalls. "Here is a Rosh Yeshivah who has been leading a yeshivah for thirty years, giving daily shiurim, imbuing thousands of talmidim with a geshmak in learning, and now he is dangerously ill. Nevertheless, the thing that is on his mind after Kol Nidrei on Yom Kippur is that he needs a bracha for a geshmak in learning. His love of Torah was incalculable!"

From Rav Elya Meir Sorotzkin, By Avrohom Birnbaum, Published by Artscroll Mesorah



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question of the taxi drivers, Rav Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 312) wrote as follows. The driver who stole the ride violated a halacha called Ani Hamehapech Becharara. It is forbidden to do so, but once it is done, the person does not have to return the customers to the original driver. Therefore, when they were stranded on the road, they should be helped. This is especially true because the mitzvah of "azov ta'azov imo" gives priority to someone who is a "son'ei," someone that you don't like.

This week's Table Talk is dedicated l'iluy neshamas

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